
A TRANSLATION of the M O T T O, inserted
for the Benefit of the ENGLISH Reader.

MY Fellow-Suff'ers ! (for I can't but know
That you, with me, have had your days of
On sorrows past, look back as now no more ; (woe
Say of the present " they will soon be o'er. "
• Fresh courage take, dismiss your painful fear,
Trust in your God, and wipe the falling tear.
The time may come when we shall these review
With calm composure, and with pleasure too.
Through various scenes of danger and of pain
We make our way, our native Clime to gain.
Lo ! there kind Heav'n has peaceful seats prepar'd ;
Endure awhile : and wait the sure reward.

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PRACTICAL TREATISE
ON
AFFLICTIONS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A
SHORT DISCOURSE
ON
VISITING THE SICK.

By STEPHEN ADDINGTON.

O Socii (neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum)

O Passi graviora; dabit Deus his quoque finem.

Revocate animos, mittite mentumque timorem

—— forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,

Tendimus in *Cælum*; sedes ubi *Deus* quietas

Ostendit. ——— Durate igitur. ——— VIRGIL.

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at MARKET-HARBOROUGH; by J. BUCKLAND,
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LONDON. 1779.

702
81

PRETENSE AND CIE

THE AUTHOR makes no other apology for the unadorned plainness with

which he has treated his subject than that he has copied the language of the

part of it, as a matter of course, in the way of writing to them in which he could not but

think plainness of style a necessary part, and that the plainness of the language is of the



least most useful and plainest words which a Christian in his discourse should use.

persons in all circumstances found the instructions which they

imparted to themselves in the most useful manner.

for an opportunity of doing so, and of doing so in the hands of others, in the most useful manner.

thought of attending to the instructions which they received, and of doing so in the most useful manner.

for the purpose of doing so, and of doing so in the most useful manner.

less of that God who has given us the power of doing so, and of doing so in the most useful manner.

for the purpose of doing so, and of doing so in the most useful manner.

for
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P R E F A C E.

THE AUTHOR makes no other apology for the unadorned seriousness with which he has treated his subject, than that he has considered himself, through the greater part of it, as addressing his fellow-creatures in the near view of eternity. Writing to them in such a situation, he could not but think plainness of speech became him, and that the plainest and most interesting truths of the word of life would be most acceptable, or at least most useful to them. These appear to him best calculated to answer the great ends which a Christian Minister should pursue in his discourses on all subjects, and to persons in all circumstances. But having found the instructions and consolations they impart peculiarly seasonable and valuable to himself in Affliction, he could not but wish for an opportunity of putting them into the hands of others in such circumstances. He thought of attempting this soon after his Recovery; but has since then had little leisure for undertakings of this Nature. Nevertheless he cannot but think himself obliged to acknowledge with great thankfulness the goodness of that GOD who not only renewed his strength, but has likewise, in many ways, rendered increasing services a growing pleasure.

This he considers, not only as an encouragement, but an obligation upon him to do whatsoever his hand finds to do, in that station in which Divine Providence has placed him, with all his might; especially considering that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither he is going. Since his own Affliction he has had many warnings of that solemn event round about him: and cannot forbear expressing the pleasure with which he has observed, both on his living and dying friends the happy influence of those great truths of the Everlasting Gospel to which he holds himself bound, on every occasion, to bear his testimony both from the Pulpit and the Press. He is from thence encouraged to hope that, attended with a divine blessing, they may not be in vain to others. His end in this Publication will be answered, if any are hereby assisted in bearing and improving their afflictions as it becometh Christians, and fitted either for greater usefulness here, or higher exaltation, services and enjoyments in the Presence of God above, where their sun shall no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.

CONTENTS

PART I. ON AFFLICTIONS.

Chap. I. *ALL Men liable to Afflictions.* p. 1—11.

Chap. II. *The Origin and End of Afflictions.*

p. 11—25.

Chap. III. *The Benefits of Afflictions—viz. to convince of important Truths, p. 28—32. Reform from the Practice, and free from the Power of Sin, p. 32—38. Promote Sanctification and Obedience, p. 38—40. Quicken and improve the divine Life in the Soul, p. 40—43. Fit and dispose for greater Usefulness, p. 43—46. Work out a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory,*

p. 46—52.

Chap. IV. *Duties of the Afflicted, viz. Consideration, p. 53—56. Self-Examination, p. 56—64.*

Humiliation, p. 64—68. Prayer, p. 68—81.

Patience, p. 82—89. Subjection to God, p. 89—96.

Faith and Hope, p. 97—103. Thanksgiving,

p. 103—109. Instructing others, p. 109—113.

Chap. V. *Exhortations to the Afflicted in different*

Circumstances, Ages, &c. &c. viz. To the Rich,

p. 113—118. to the Poor, p. 118—121. the

Young, p. 122—127. the Middle-aged, p. 127—

130. the Old, p. 130—136. Parents, p. 137

—140. Ministers, p. 140—145. Persons suf-

fering the immediate Consequences of their Sins,

p. 146—152 those who suffer for Righteousness

Sake, p. 153—156.

PART II. On Recovery from AFFLICTIONS.

Chap. I. *Instructions to all recovered from Afflictions; scriptur Recollection recommended*, p. 157—159. *Self Examination*, p. 159—161. *Sorrow for Sin*, p. 161—164. *Thanksgiving*, p. 164—171. *Prayer*, p. 172—174. *Watchfulness*, p. 174—178. *Dying daily*, p. 178—184. *Trust in God*, p. 184—188. *Sympathy with the Afflicted*, p. 188—191. *Proper Improvement of Restored Powers and Privileges*, p. 191—193. *Self-Dedication to the Lord*, p. 194—208.

Chap. II. *Exhortations to Persons of different Dispositions and Characters after Afflictions*—viz. to the Ungodly and the Sinner, p. 206—215. *Formal Professors*, p. 215—221. *The Self-Righteous*, p. 221—225. *Persons depressed and discouraged in and by their Afflictions*, p. 225—228.

Discourse on visiting the Sick; containing

Hints to all who attend them, p. 229—232,

A Letter to a young Physician, p. 233—241.

Short Address to Ministers, p. 241. *ad finem.*

E R R A T A:

PAGE 21. inordinatetly, *r. inordinately.*

P. 28. l. 18. dele *of.*

P. 60. l. 1. for *knew*, *r. know*, & l. 10. dele *there*.

P. 66. dele *the*. — P. 71. last line but one supply *a*.

P. 83. l. 19. dele *who*. — P. 86. l. 15. for *proves*,

r. prove. — P. 103. l. 8. supply *that*. — P. 115.

5 wanting. — P. 116. for *dangerss*, *r. dangers*.

P. 180. In the Running Title, for *ing*, *r. Dying*.

PART I.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

Containing short hints on the various Afflictions to which all men are liable.

T was observed † by one who lived in a very early age of the world that “Al-
“ though Affliction com-
“ eth not out of the dust, neither
“ doth trouble spring out of the
“ ground, yet,” such is the consti-
tution of things in the present state,
that “ man is born to trouble,” it is
as natural for him to suffer, “ as ” it
is for “ the sparks ” to “ fly upward.”
The observation has been often re-

† Job v. 6, 7.

A

peatedly

peated, and is confirmed by the histories of all ages and nations.

Not a few endure the hardships of *Poverty*; multitudes are born to it, and if here and there one goes through life in ease and affluence, many whose prospects were encouraging when they entered upon it, afterwards suffer disappointments and losses which hasten and encrease the infirmities of that period in which the grasshopper is a burden. How distressing that trial is to such as have many to supply, and wish to provide things honest in the sight of all men is perhaps known only to those who feel it.

Others suffer much from their *Connections*. The ties of nature and friendship by which we are united to each other are, undoubtedly, on the whole very great blessings. Life would be tasteless and miserable without them. Yet those who enjoy most are liable to suffer most

most from the social affections. The grief of the benevolent in scenes of trouble is in proportion to the joy they feel in the health and prosperity of those around them. Taught by the dictates of humanity and the principles of the gospel they cannot but weep with all that weep, and most of all with those in whose happiness they are most tenderly interested. Few could be insensible to the sorrows of a friend, but the distresses of a brother or a sister, a parent or a child, a husband or a wife inflict a deeper, a more painful, and a more lasting wound. And *when such friends part* tis the survivor dies." Yet some suffer more from the behaviour of those that remain alive than from the deaths of those that are taken away. The folly, ingratitude and perverseness, of a disobedient ungodly child! Oh who can describe, or who that has not felt the trial can conceive the anguish of

of heart it occasions to a thoughtful affectionate parent? and if called to follow a youth of such a character to an untimely grave, no wonder if, in the bitterness of his heart, the parent adopt David's language in that situation "Oh my son! my son! would God I had died instead of thee, my son! my son!"

But I shall forbear to enter on a more particular enumeration of of these trials.

And, in order to proceed to what is principally intended, shall only just mention, among other troubles, that of a *sorrowful spirit*. I do not pass this over in a few words as being a light affliction. Those who feel it pronounce it the most painful of all trials; as it renders the unhappy sufferer insensible of every surrounding mercy, and adds inexpressibly to the weight of every other burden. "The spirit of a man," said Solomon, * "will

* Prov. xviii. 14.

"sustain

“sustain his bodily infirmity, but
“a wounded spirit who can bear?”
It would, however, lead me from
my present design to enlarge on
mental dejection. Yet the case of
those whose spirits are affected, as
many are, by bodily disorders
will, in part, be included in that to
which the following pages chiefly
refer, viz.

SICKNESS: — including all the
various diseases and infirmities to
which human nature is liable; in
whatever way, or from what quar-
ter so ever they may seem more
immediately to come.

Upon the transgression of our
first parents a curse was denounc-
ed by God upon each of them. *
And that the evils therein threat-
ened were not intended to be con-
fined to the first pair of the human
race experience has sufficiently
convinced their descendants, male

* Gen. iii. 16—19.

and female, through all successive generations.

Moreover, as death reigned from Adam to Moses, so likewise has it with all the evils of its train, from Moses to Christ; and will continue till Jesus come a second time, without sin unto salvation. Our infant offspring bring seeds of numberless disorders into the world with them which hurry multitudes of them to the grave as soon as they come forth from the womb; and all the several stages of infancy, childhood and youth are in this respect as well as others altogether vanity. "The son of man cometh up like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth like a shadow and continueth not.†" Yea "man in his best estate," at a period of life when his faculties seem most firm, when he promises himself most, and when the world

† Job xiv. 2.

pects most from him; even then
his strength is often weakened by
the way, and he is cut off in the
midst of enjoyment and usefulness.

One dies in his full strength, be-
ing wholly at ease and quiet, his
breasts are full of milk and his
bones are moistened with mar-
row, and another dieth in the
bitterness of his soul, and never
eateth with pleasure, they shall
lye down alike in the dust, and
the worms shall cover them. *

At the *Infirmities of Old Age* pa-
netically described by Solomon †
a period of life when he felt
himself, gradually decay and
dissolve this house of our taberna-
cle without the attack of any very
violent disorder.

Nor are these evils the peculiar
lot of any one rank or charac-
ter. Persons in all stations and
circumstances, of all capacities
and attainments are exposed to

* Job xxi. 23—26.

† Eccles. xii. 2—5.

them

them. Pain and sickness know no distinction of high and low, rich and poor. "When thou with rebukes (said the sacred psalmist in an address to the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe) dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth-eaten garment, surely every man is vanity." || The man of wisdom and understanding, of prudence and skill, of wit and learning, of strength and power.—Diseases and Death attack the ingenious Artist, the busy and prosperous Merchant, the skilful Physician, the learned and laborious Divine, the mighty Warrior, the able Statesman, the crowned Head. "One event happeneth to all" yea what hath man, any man, of all his labour, for all his days are, or are liable to be sorrow, and his travail grief. †

|| Ps. xxxix. 11.

† Eccles. ii. 14, 22.

All flesh is grass, and all the
goodness thereof is as the flow-
er of the field; surely the peo-
ple is grass. * I will conclude
these remarks on the *Universality*
of afflictions with observing that
persons of all characters are expo-
sed to them. Solomon made this
observation "There is one event to
the righteous and to the wicked,
to the clean, and to the unclean;
to him that sacrificeth and to him
that sacrificeth not, as is the
good so is the sinner. †"—a frail,
afflicted, dying creature.

Here, Reader, pause a few mo-
ments, to recollect and realize the
truth of which you have been
reminded "I am born to suffer and
to die." You may truly say so who
or whatever you are; infirm or heal-
thy, old or young, poor or rich,
in a low or in an exalted station.

* II. xl. 6, 7.

Eccles. ii. 14, 16 ix. 2.

Lay your account therefore for afflictions; not with a foreboding restless anxiety that would deprive you of the enjoyment of health and ease: but labour to maintain that serious sense of the vanity of human life, and human nature in general, especially of your own frailty which becomes a creature whose breath is in his nostrils: such a sense of it as may abate the terror and surprize of afflictions at whatever season, or in whatever form they may overtake you.— Now feel for and with the afflicted; cherish the most affectionate good wishes for their support and relief; and be ever ready to contribute towards it to the utmost of your power. We ought thus to bear one anothers burdens as we would fulfil the law of Christ; and it becomes us so to do as being ourselves also in the body.— When visited with sickness, sorrow, or pain wonder not as though some
strange

Strange thing had happened unto you. Man, every man is born to trouble.—Nor be discouraged by your sufferings; God is not dealing with you therein as the chief of sinners: many are the afflictions of the righteous,—But learn from thence the certainty of a future state in which an apparent and everlasting distinction will be made between him that serveth the Lord and him that serveth him not.—Wait patiently for the discoveries of that world, and take heed lest, a promise being made of entering into that rest which remains for the people of God, you should seem to come short of it.

CH A P. II.

The Origin and End of Afflictions.

ELiphaz very properly reminds Job in the passage referred to above, that “affliction cometh not
“ forth

“ forth of the dust, neither doth
“ sorrow spring out of the ground.”

It would be equally impious and weak to ascribe our sufferings to *Chance*: nor ought we to confine our attention in them to, what are called, *second causes*. By whatever instruments or in whatever way they are brought upon us the word of truth teaches us to observe and acknowledge in them all the interposition of a wise, righteous and good Providence. No *Creature*, visible or invisible, however powerful or malicious, afar off or near, of the human species or of any other rank of beings, is able to distress us without the permission of him “ for whom, and by “ whom, and through whom are all “ things.” As to our fellow creatures of the human race, the scripture assures us that the passions as well as the powers of *Man* are under the controul of the Almighty. And that his people may not be unreasonable

ably

ably afraid of either, he has expressly engaged that "the wrath of man shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof," those workings and effects of it that would no longer answer the purposes of his wisdom, justice and goodness "he will restrain." The rage of the *Church's Enemies* is called * "the rod of his anger," and the staff in their hand, "his indignation." Remarkably instructive in this view was the confusion which God put upon Balak, King of Moab, in not only shutting the mouth of Balaam when sent by him to curse Israel, but afterwards even obliging him to pronounce his blessing repeatedly upon them till he was compelled to cry out "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? surely there is no incantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against

* Is. x. 5.

B

" Israel,

14 *The Origin and End*

"Israel, all that the Lord speaketh that I must do.†" Our times are in his hands; not in our own, not in the hands of our brethren of mankind about us. Neither is it in the power of *beings of any other order* to distress us at pleasure. Satan did indeed greatly afflict holy Job. But that infernal spirit could not touch either his person or his property till permitted by the Supreme Head of all principalities and powers. Nor could the *Demons*, mentioned in the New Testament, so much as enter the herd of swine till they had leave of him who is Lord of all. Not all the hosts of hell without his permission would be able to wound or grieve the feeblest of the saints. The Apostle Peter, in the same Paragraph in which he warns of the malignity of their leader, gives an encouraging intimation of his subjection

† Num. chap. xxii. & 'xxiii.

to the controul of God, "Be
 " watchful, for your adversary
 " the Devil goes about like a roar-
 " ing lion, seeking whom he may
 " devour." A firm faith in the
 Providence of God, and a govern-
 ing regard to it would correct
 groundless notions of the power of
invisible spirits, and silence painful
 apprehensions concerning them.
 " We vilify God (says a serious
 " writer) and defile his glory when
 " our fear of the craft, or pow-
 " er, or malice of creatures sti-
 " fles our faith in him." The
 command of God to his people on
 this head is * " Fear ye not their
 " fear (i. e. with a fear like that
 " of the ungodly) neither be a-
 " fraid, sanctify the Lord God of
 " Hosts, and let him be your fear
 " and let him be your dread." He
 has appointed unto man his inhe-
 ritage, and the disposal of his

* If. viii. 12.

lot is of the Lord. This is true of every man, but the scriptures frequently assure us that a special Providence is engaged for the security and happiness of the righteous, "The eyes of the Lord run" to and fro through the whole "earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of him whose heart "is perfect before him.*" And if Christ could assure his disciples (as he did)† that not a sparrow falls to the ground without their heavenly father, and that the very hairs of their heads were all numbered, most certainly every thing that affects their enjoyment and usefulness in life, and the time of their removal out of it must be under his direction and influence. Yes, afflictions are his messengers, sent by him when and where and for what purposes he pleases. Object not, sufferer, My trials seem

* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. † Matt. x. 30.

to have been more the will of man than of God; for “the hearts of
“men, of kings, are in the hands
“of the Lord, as the rivers of wa-
“ter he turneth them whitherfo-
“ever he will.” Though it was the
cruelty of Joseph’s brethren that
involved him in those grievous
sufferings he endured when they
hated him and sold him, yet he
spoke afterwards of them with an
amiable mixture of piety and fra-
ternal affection as appointed by a
wise, righteous and good Provi-
dence. * “Be not grieved nor an-
“gry with yourselves that ye sold
“me hither, for God sent me be-
“fore you to preserve you a Poste-
“rity in the earth, and to save your
“lives by a great deliverance: so
“now it was not you that sent me
“hither but God.” Jesus God’s
dear suffering son spake of his trials
as the cup which his father had giv-

* Gen. xlv. 5—8.

18 *The Origin and End*

en him: and they were represented in the same light by his apostle Peter an eye-witness of them, though he, at the same time, saw and said that they were brought upon him more immediately by sinful men, "He that was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (says he to his Lord's murderers) "ye have seized, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."†

And if the interposition of a Providence is to be acknowledged where creatures, as instruments, have been apparently concerned, much more in those personal afflictions which befall us without the intervention of such second causes. These trials are frequently called the "chastisements of the Lord," and he that endures them is said to be "rebuked of him." The language of the

† Acts ii. 23.

Almigh-

Almighty on this head is "I kill,
 "and I make alive, I wound and
 "I heal." † His servant David,
 when rebuked by sickness, said to
 him, "I am consumed by the blow
 "of thine hand," and again, "I
 "was dumb and opened not
 "my mouth because thou didst
 "it." ||--And as we have reason to
 say of every loss we sustain, and
 every affliction we suffer, "It is
 "the Lord" it becomes us to add
 "let him do as seemeth good in
 "his sight: each of us with holy
 Job making it our request to him
 who does nothing in vain "Do not
 "condemn me, shew me where-
 "fore thou contendest with me."

This we have all reason to be-
 lieve, that afflictions are the *con-*
sequence of sin. Man was happy
 as long as he remained innocent:
 but when he transgressed the law
 of his Maker a curse was denounc-

† Deut. xxxii. 39, 40. || Ps. xxx.xi

ed upon him; Adam and his posterity became liable to death and all the miseries that attend it.—Man is *born* to trouble,—It is an inheritance entailed unalienably upon him from generation to generation. The apostle Paul, speaking of this, says “As by one man sin entered” into the world, and death by sin, so” a sentence of “death” including all the afflictions and sorrows that are its solemn harbingers, “has” passed upon all men for that all “have sinned.” † As sinful creatures we all carry the more immediate causes of our afflictions and mortality about us: and many sins involve those that commit them in sufferings peculiar to themselves. The Providence of God, in some instances, marks out a person’s easy besetting sin in his punishment. The proud heart is brought low by some peculiarly humblying vi-

† Rom. v. 12,

sitations:

situations; and he whose affections are set inordinately upon the world and creatures is bereaved and impoverished. It is very remarkable that Rachel died in Child-bearing, after calling out in a passionate exclamation awhile before "Give me children or else I die." Compare Gen. chap. xxx. 1. with chap. xxxv. 17—19. Tho' the frailty of the human frame in general is such that we have all reason to say with Dr. Watts

"Our life contains a thousand springs
"And dies if one be gone;
"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
"Should keep in tune so long.

The body is a delicate piece of machinery liable to be put out of order many ways, continually exposed to disasters, and which is made to move but for a very short period, so that even tho' it is not disturbed by any external violence, it will in a little time necessarily wear out and moulder to dust.

" Lord

“ Lord make me to know my
 “ end; and the measure of my
 “ days; what it is, that I may know
 “ how frail I am: So teach us
 “ to number our days that we may
 “ apply our hearts unto wisdom.”
 to that divine wisdom which such
 a state of things is intended to
 teach, and which all the afflictive
 events incident upon it constantly
 and powerfully recommend.

We are expressly assured, that
 the Lord chasteneth not for his
 own pleasure, but for our profit.
 “ Thou shalt remember (said God
 “ to Israel) all the way that
 “ the Lord thy God led thee in
 “ the wilderness, to humble thee,
 “ and to prove thee, and to do
 “ thee good at thy latter end.”
 Happy sufferer that can say with
 Job “ When he hath tried me
 “ shall come forth like gold.”
 His were heavy trials to nature

of Afflictions.

28

and to grace too: but they were appointed, as all others are, by God in faithfulness and in loving kindness. "It is good for me," said one, it is good for me, has many a one had reason to say, "that I have been afflicted;" and every one that properly endureth and improveth the trial will make the acknowledgment, for he shall receive the crown of life. * A chastening and supporting *GOD and Redeemer* is glorified one way or other, and his interest advanced, in and by the afflictions of his saints—particularly by the meekness and patience, faith and fortitude they have manifested under the rod of the Almighty and the wrath of man.—Hereby an haughty and impious Nebuchadnezzar was brought to bless the God of Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego.† The apostle Paul, writing to the Philippians,

* James i. 2. † Dan. 15, 16, 17, 18, 28.

gives

gives them to understand || that
 "the things which had happened
 "to him had fallen out to the fur-
 "therance of the gospel, inſomuch
 "that many of the brethren in the
 "Lord waxing confident by his
 "bonds were much more bold to
 "ſpeak the word without fear." †

Thus, as is often obſerved, the
 blood & aſhes of the martyrs, ſcat-
 tered in various parts and ages of
 the world, have proved as fruitful
 ſeeds from whence have ſprung
 up plants of righteouſneſs and
 renown in the church of God.
 In ſome inſtances painful and my-
 ſterious trials, as Joſeph's referred
 to above, ‡ have proved the in-
 troduutory means of great tempo-
 ral good both to the ſufferer him-
 ſelf and many connected with him.

In others the ſight of a perſon's
 afflictions, and an obſervation of
 his behaviour under them has ſug-

|| Phil. i. 12—14 † Gen. l. 20, 21 Ex. i. 11, 12

gested many *useful instructions* to those who have been round about them,—some, before thoughtless of the vanity of human nature have thereby been taught to fear him in whose hand their health and life is and whose are all their ways; some that were too trifling in matters of everlasting moment, too fond of the world, and too sanguine in their pursuit of it and expectations from it, have thereby been taught to set their affections more constantly and ardently on things above; and others, who through the distressing fear of death were all their lives time before in the most painful bondage, by observing the peaceful and joyous end of the righteous have been happily relieved and comforted, and prepared to meet their own summons with composure and resignation.

But we pass from these general hints to examine the various benefits of afflictions more particularly and largely in the next chapter.



C H A P. III.

The Benefits of Afflictions.

NO chastening for the present (while under it) seemeth to flesh and blood, joyous but grievous: nevertheless unto those who are exercised (properly disciplined) thereby, it yieldeth fruit; wholesome, salutary fruit." There have been instances in which violent disorders have proved means of introducing a sounder and more established state of health to the body afterwards than ever it enjoyed before. This, however, is not the usual tendency or design of afflictions: nor are they commonly sent to promote any temporal advantage, though Providence may so over-rule them, in some instances,

ces, as to make them the means of promoting it. Afflictions of body are to *do the soul good and that for ever*; to promote our spiritual health and prosperity; and by forming us to eminent improvements in the divine life to fit us for the service of God and our generation here; and for the company, entertainments and employments of the higher orders of glorified spirits hereafter. Some of the most precious sentiments that ever dropt from the lips of the children of God and some of the most valuable and useful discourses delivered and penned by his servants were the immediate fruits of Afflictions. Nor do the benefits of them to the people of God end with their abode in the body. "Our light affliction that is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They do not indeed

answer these ends upon every sufferer. We see some nothing the better for their afflictions, nay more stupid and hardened after them than they were before. The condition of such is dreadfully dangerous; "For he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." * "But blessed is the man whom the Lord chasteneth and teacheth out of his law." † And we may observe

§. 1. *Afflictions are sent to convince us of serious, important truths of which we were ignorant or heedless of before.* We are told it was a frequent and favourite saying of Luther "Schola crucis est schola lucis" "The school of affliction is the school of instruction." And blessed be God he has taught his people many very useful les-

* Prov. xxix. 1.

† Ps, xciv. 12.

sons in it. May we even be inclined to hear the rod, and receive with humility and attention every caution and counsel it is intended to suggest.

It speaks the mighty power and supreme authority of Him in whose hand it is, and reminds us of our constant and absolute dependance upon him for life and breath and all things.

Hence we learn the frailty of our frame, and the precarious tenure on which we hold our abode in this earthly house of our tabernacle.

Our pains and sicknesses teach us the purity and the truth of God, his invariable detestation of sin, and the infinite evil of it, as that which has involved mankind in all ages in so many and such grievous sufferings.

But the stroke thou feelest, afflicted christian, is not only to teach thee the evil of sin in general, but

more especially the evil of thine own; the errors of thy ways, & the pollutions of thine heart; to shew thee what thereof was unknown to thee, or overlooked by thee before. Distress brought Joseph's brethren to a painful reflection on their conduct, and a penitent acknowledgment of their sin in it, "Verily we are guilty concerning our brother.*" The rod of reproof gives wisdom: such is the pride of the human heart that in prosperity it deceives many with flattering notions of the excellency of their characters and the safety of their state, who to an unerring, holy and impartial eye appear in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Merciful affliction that which undeceives us in a matter that concerns the safety and well-being of the soul for ever; which gives us just views of

* Gen. xlii. 21.

our guilt and danger, and of the insufficiency of every confidence and portion short of that revealed and recommended in the gospel. That sets the importance of eternity before us in a just light, and the excellencies of that Saviour who alone can deliver from the wrath to come.—Salutary chastening! that thus at once corrects our false notions of ourselves, of our God and our Redeemer, of this world and of the world to come; proves the means of enlightening the eyes of our dark understandings that we may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints: or sets the excellencies of that inheritance, and the beauty and importance of the method of obtaining it revealed in the gospel in a light clearer and stronger, more striking and animating than ever they appeared in to us before. When sufferings brought

brought the prodigal to his right mind, to reflect, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger"—and to resolve thereupon "I will arise and go to my father &c." * Then had he reason to say with the Psalmist "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes, †"

§. 2. *Afflictions are intended means of reforming from the practice of sin and of subduing its reigning power in the soul.*

Sickness, pain and trouble overtake many in a state and time when such a reformation is greatly needed,—when it might be said of the errors and deficiencies of their hearts and lives they were so evident they could not be hid, either from themselves or others, and were so many they could not

* Luke xv. 17, 18. † Ps. cxix. 67, 71

be numbered. Such might well deprecate the judgment of Ephraim, (Hosea iv. 17.) "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." My word, my servants, my rod, my spirit, let him alone. Their case would be then hopeless, and their damnation sure. But that gracious God who desireth not the death of the sinner sends line upon line and precept upon precept to reclaim him; and makes use of his rod to enforce the instructions of his word. Oh that the sinner in such circumstances may be taught the language recommended by Elihu to Job * "I have borne chastisements, I will not offend any more, that which I see not teach thou me, if I have done iniquity I will do no more." Happy they who are thus humbled and renewed in the spirit of the mind, and brought from

* Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

the state of strangers and enemies
into the bonds of the covenant.
An affliction is a blessing indeed
that has proved the means of de-
livering the infidel, the ungodly
and impure from the power of
darkness and translating them into
the kingdom of God's dear Son.

It was said of Manasseh, king
of Judah, in his prosperity, † "that
he did that which was evil in the
" sight of the Lord, like unto the
" abominations of the heathen
" whom the Lord had cast out
" before the children of Israel;
" but when he was in affliction he
" besought the Lord his God, and
" humbled himself greatly before
" the God of his fathers, and took
" away the strange gods and idols
" out of the house of the Lord &c.
" Then Manasseh knew that Jeho-
" vah he was God." Thus like-
wise was the pride and haughti-

• Ezek. xx. 37. † 2 Chron. xxxiii. 2, 12, 15.

ness of Nebuchadnezzar brought low, infomuch that he who had been saying to those faithful servants of the Most High whom he ordered to be cast into the fiery furnace "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands" was taught to praise and extol the King of Heaven, convinced by the humbling revolutions of his own life that those who walk in pride he is able to abase. * If they proved effectual to humble and soften his proud and hard heart, the most painful and mortifying scenes of his life were its best blessings to him. Such is the tendency and design of every trial. It is appointed by God that like the fire into which Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were thrown, it may destroy our bonds, and produce an effect upon our souls similar to that of the refiner's fire on the metal which is cast into it

* Dan. iv. 37.

wipe out the dross away, purify the
 heart from every corrupt lust, sub-
 due every irregular passion and
 appetite: all pride, and malice,
 and anger, and unbelief and world-
 ly mindedness; in a word, that we
 may put off concerning the former
 conversation the old man which is
 corrupt according to the deceitful
 lusts, and be renewed in the spirit
 of the mind. † “ They shall bear
 “ the punishment of their iniquity
 (said God concerning his ancient
 professing people) “ that the house
 “ of Israel may go no more astray
 “ from me, neither be polluted any
 “ more with their transgressions.”
 There are many other express and
 plain, as well as figurative repre-
 sentations of this serious truth in
 the word of God, that his gracious
 design herein is that the iniquity
 of Jacob should be purged, and
 that this is all the fruit, to take a

† Eph. iv. 22, 23.

† Ez. xiv. 10, 11.

way his sin. * “ If sin (said a good
 “ man) out-live the dying body,
 “ it will live eternally to sting
 “ and torment the never-dying
 “ soul.” Dreadful indeed is the
 situation of any of whom it may
 be said as it was once of that peo-
 ple † “ Why should ye be strick-
 “ en any more? ye will revolt
 “ more and more:”—For he that
 being often reprov'd hardeneth
 his neck shall suddenly be destroy-
 ed and that without remedy.

But thy afflictions, sufferer, are
 mercies indeed, if by purifying
 thy soul, they prove the means
 of saving thee from that ruin to
 which thine iniquities had expos-
 ed thee. “ Mariners throw over
 “ board (says Mr. Flavel) their
 “ richest lading in a storm to pre-
 “ serve the vessel and their lives;
 “ Soldiers in a city besieged beat
 “ or burn down the fairest build-

* Is. xxvii. 9.

† Is. l. 5.

38 *Afflictions sent to promote*

ings without the walls in which
the enemy might take shelter;
a Surgeon cuts off a gangrened
arm or leg to save the life of his
patient--& wilt thou repine at thy
God for casting over that which
would sink thee in a storm? for
pulling down that which would
give thine enemy an advantage
against thee in an hour of temp-
tation? or for cutting off that
which would endanger the life
of thy soul?" "We are chasten-
ed of the Lord" (says the apostle
Paul) "that we may not be con-
demned with the world." *

§. 3. *Afflictions are designed to pro-
mote sanctification and obedience;*
or, in the language of the New
Testament, *They are sent of G.O.D*
that the sufferer may hereby be made
partaker of his holiness. Herein we
remark the design of our Heavenly
Father carried farther than was
mentioned under the former head,
not only are old things to be done a-
way

way but all things must become new. The vine-dresser cuts off superfluous and withering branches that there may be more and better fruit on those that remain. An all-wise and gracious God wounds us here and there, and removes this and the other part of ourselves that stuck too near to us and that we were rejoicing and glorying in as an ornament and a stay, that we may live more to and upon himself. To call back our wandering affections from earth and creatures, that they may be fixed on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. "Before I was afflicted (said David) I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Well indeed might he then add, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes:" * learn to delight in them and prac-

* Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

40 *Afflictions designed to improve*
use them, and that with ever-
growing zeal and activity. This
is the will of God even our
sanctification, and he is pursu-
ing that end by means which ap-
pear to him most proper and ef-
fectual. If his word and ordinan-
ces succeed, well. If not, in faith-
fulness and loving-kindness he
corrects, that we may, as dutiful
children, learn obedience by the
things which we suffer. That we
may in all things and at all times
be more conformed to his image,
and more submissive to his will.
That we may walk more humbly
and devoutly with him both in the
publick and private exercises of
devotion, and in all the duties of
sobriety, righteousness and true
holiness. — For which purpose, as
we are to observe,

§. 4. *It is a farther beneficial end
of afflictions to quicken and improve
the divine life in the soul. As that
life is progressive, and the christi-
an's*

the divine Life in the Soul. 41

an's present comfort and happiness, as well the degree of his future bliss and glory greatly depend upon its improvement, every thing that tends to advance it must be a blessing to him. Afflictions have this tendency, and they are appointed to answer this end. "Now
"no chastening for the present
"seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless it yieldeth the
"peaceable fruit of righteousness
"unto them which are exercised
"thereby." * Various, sweet and beautiful are those fruits, which while they adorn the christian, and teach him to aspire after the inheritance of the saints in light, at once prepare him for it, and for receiving those communications from above which cheer and quicken him in his way thither. A principle of faith in God and a Redeemer is essential to the fin-

* Heb. xii. 11.

42 *Afflictions appointed to justify*
 cerity of the christian character.
 But that faith is often low and languid, and mingled with unbelief. Afflictions are intended, by exercising, to strengthen it: that, as the genuine children of Abraham, we may be strong in faith giving glory to God. They are sent to promote our humility, meekness and patience; our love and subjection to our Heavenly Father, and that spirituality and purity in which we bear the image of God and are made partakers of the divine nature. So says the apostle to the Hebrews * "He chasteneth us for our profit that we may be partakers of his holiness." And again † "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our

* Heb. xii. 10

† Rom. v. 3—5.

" hearts,

and dispose for greater usefulness. 43

“ hearts, by the Holy Ghost which
“ is given unto us.” Permit me
therefore to address you in the
words of the apostle James, * “ My
“ brethren, count it all joy when
“ ye fall into divers temptations
“ or trials, knowing this, that the
“ trying of your faith worketh pa-
“ tience;” and is indeed intended
to make you perfect in every
grace, and in every good work.

Moreover

§. 3. *Afflictions are intended to fit
and dispose for more abundant use-
fulness such as are spared in them
and recovered from them.* Some of
GOD’S suffering servants have not
indeed been useless in their sick
chambers, or even upon their dy-
ing beds. Their examples, instruc-
tions, cautions, entreaties and en-
couragements have done many a
heart good about them. Some have
been awakened and others animat-

* James i. 2, 3.

44 Afflictions appointed to fit

ed by the humility and devout gratitude with which they have there related what God has done for their souls; by the serious importunity and affectionate tenderness with which they have recommended the experienced mercy of God in Christ, and the exercises of communion with him to the regards of surrounding relations. Some of the most excellent of Paul's epistles were written in a prison where he suffered for Christ, and as his sufferings tended thus to the furtherance of the gospel, they were in their effects, blessings to him; as all afflictions are to every one whom they make in any degree more useful to others. This they do by cherishing those dispositions that both fit and incline the sufferer to serve God and his generation with greater zeal and activity when raised up again from a bed of sickness than ever he had done before. Thus warned of the
uncer-

and dispose for greater usefulness. 45

uncertainty of life and health he
is stirred up to an earnest solici-
tude to make the best improve-
ment of his time and talents while
they are continued: and then af-
ter considering this as some re-
turn of gratitude to that God who
has mercifully spared and restored
him. When David had been thus
recovered the first concern of his
soul was "What shall I ren-
der to God for all his bene-
fits towards me?" * The families
of God's people and the church
of Christ have, in many happy in-
stances, reaped the benefit of the
afflictions both of ministers and
private christians who have been
more eminent and shining lights
after they came out of the furnace
than ever they appeared before.
And they themselves cannot but
acknowledge that a blessing to
them which has rendered them

* Ps. cxvi. 12.

blessings

blessings to others. Afflictions do this likewise when they tend to soften the mind into those sympathetic feelings which dispose us to enter tenderly into the distresses of others, and to do every thing in our power for their support and relief. It is said of our great Lord
 “ That having himself suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Once more, I will add in the words of the Apostle Paul

§. 6. “ *Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” He speaks therein the language of the household of faith; they only can adopt it: Nor could he mean to intimate that either common afflictions, or even those to which the faithful in Christ Jesus are exposed in their adherence to him, entitle

the sufferer to the honours and joys of his right hand above. He teaches all to look for eternal life as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. He expected it himself in no other way though a labouring servant and faithful martyr in his cause. Yet said he to the active and diligent "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord,"^{||} and he himself hoped and rejoiced in expectation that having suffered with him, he, his brethren and his Lord should be glorified together; * and that with a glory proportionate to the services and sufferings they had gone through in their pursuit of it. "If we suffer with him," (says he to Timothy) [†] "we shall also reign with him." The apostle Peter expressed the same hope, and said much to encourage all the saints to entertain it with him—"Beloved, rejoice

^{||} 2 Cor. iv. 17.

* Rom. viii. 17.

"inasmuch

“ inasmuch as ye are partakers of
 “ Christ’s sufferings, that when his
 “ glory shall be revealed ye may
 “ be glad also with exceeding
 “ joy.”* Their great and good
 master had encouraged this hope
 in the parable of the pounds. †
 —When he represented the Lord
 of that servant who had gained
 ten pounds as saying to him “Well,
 “ thou good servant, because thou
 “ hast been faithful in a little have
 “ thou authority over ten cities &c.

But present afflictions may in o-
 ther views be everlasting blessings,
 particularly as tending to increase
 the sweetness of that rest which
 remains for the people of God
 and as made the means of fitting
 us for it. The christian pilgrim
 will undoubtedly welcome the
 end of his journey with peculiar
 pleasure and thankfulness after
 having met with many difficulties
 and dangers by the way

* 1 Peter iv. 15. † Luke xix. 12

“ There

For Glory.

There on a green and flow'ry mount
Our weary souls shall sit,
And with transporting joy recount
The labours of our feet.

And that joy must be heighten-
ed by the recollection of those tri-
als which formed the soul for more
exalted and entertaining services a-
mong the higher orders of celesti-
al spirits. Blessed moments of
pain and sickness, blessed scenes
of distress and weeping those that
subdued its iniquities, that taught
it to live upon its God and to live
to him; that, convincing it of the
vanity of every other confidence,
endeared the Saviour, and raised
its holy ardent longings for that
world in which he shall see him
as he is and be changed into the
same image from glory to glory.
If, after their recovery, one and
another of the servants of God has
had reason to acknowledge "It
" was good for me that I have
" been afflicted" With how much
E greater

greater pleasure and thankfulness will they all make the acknowledgment when they discern the wisdom and goodness of divine chastisements, and the benefits they have derived from them in the light of heaven as a preparative discipline by which they have been trained up for the bliss, company and employments of that holy happy world.

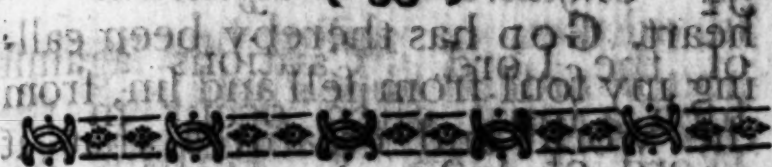
Before we proceed farther in the subject, let us employ a few moments here in recollecting what has been already offered, and each apply it to himself.

I have been reminded of the great and good ends afflictions are intended to answer. What am I the better for mine? The rod as well as the word of God will be attended with some serious and important consequences: it will be either a favour of life unto life, or a favour of death unto death. Which has it been, which is it like to

to prove unto me? I have heard often of sanctified afflictions—If ends like these have been answered upon my soul, I may hope mine have been sanctified. And have they? Has my mind been hereby opened to sacred truths which I knew little of, or paid little regard to before? Do I find that by being cast into the fire mine iniquities have been purged, and that the happy fruit of all has been to take away my sins? Has the life & work of God in my soul been in any measure strengthened & improved by my chastenings? Have I reason to hope that in consequence thereof I am more than ever the Lord's? more obedient to his will and more conformed to his image? Oh to say with holy David "Before I was afflicted I
 " went astray, but now have I
 " learnt thy statutes." Learnt to know them, to delight in them, and to keep them with my whole
 E 2 heart

heart. God has thereby been calling my soul from self and sin, from the world and creatures, that it might more than ever live with him, live upon him, and live to him: And do I find within myself, does it appear to others that these ends have been answered by his rod? Am I more alive to him now than I was before I felt it? more desirous of honouring and glorifying my God and Redeemer upon earth; and have I reason to think I am now more meet to dwell with him in heaven and to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light?

Then may I say with great pleasure and thankfulness, It has been good for me to be afflicted.



CHAP. IV.

Duties of the Afflicted.

WE are often reminded in the Word of God that besides the duties enjoined upon all christians, there are others more immediately suitable to our particular situations and circumstances, and the various events with which we are attended. — we are exhorted for instance,

§. 1. “*In the day of Adversity to consider.*” — Consideration indeed ever becomes us both as reasonable creatures and as christians; but we are more especially called to it when the hand of God is upon us. — This consideration is opposed first to that *stupidity and hardness of heart* which despises the chastening

54 *Consideration in Affliction.*

of the Lord. Cautions against such a spirit often occur in the Word of God. * Perhaps because they are much needed, as well as to impress every heart with a just fear and abhorrence of the crime and every thing that would lead to it. Israel were past feeling and without serious thought when the prophet Jeremiah had occasion to make that complaint of them to the Almighty + "O Lord thou hast stricken them but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock." — Again, In affliction do not indulge a *hasty Spirit*, but consider. Those certainly do not consider as they ought whose mouths are filled with bitter complaints or passionate exclamations, who are continually

* Prov. iii. 11. v. 17 Heb. xii. 5 + Jer. v. 3
fretting

Consideration in Affliction. 55

fluctuating and tossing to and fro in affliction like a wild bull in a net, and who think hardly of their lot, or of that God who has appointed it. The voice of the Lord to the sufferer is "Be still and know that I am God." Suffer not angry passions to break out from thy lips, nor to rise and swell in thy heart, but consider. — Nor would a light, vain and trifling spirit be excusable in the least then. In the day of prosperity, says Solomon, be joyful. — But he meant not to countenance, even in the most prosperous seasons, the song of the drunkard or the laughter of fools. He condemned both. Yet in the midst of enjoyments, and when favoured with a capacity of relishing them we may be chearful, nay we are commanded to rejoice, to rejoice in the Lord and his goodness towards us. Nor does any one passage in the Word of God, or the genius and spirit of christianity in general

general enjoin, even in the most afflicted circumstances, a rigorous severity, or a sullen sadness. There is a cheerfulness that adorns the countenance of the suffering Christian. And many such have been enabled to rejoice in tribulation. But their joy proceeded not from a trifling and thoughtless spirit. It sprang from serious thought, it was the result of deliberate consideration: an attention to the hand of God in their afflictions and his wise and gracious designs in them. To this we are called both by the Word and the rod of God in such circumstances. — As likewise to

§. 2. “*Serious Self-examination.*”

To enquire into our religious state and character, and the foundation of our hope for another and better world. Heads of families should indeed, if able, *look into the affairs of their households*, and settle them with equity and discretion then if they have not done it before. Bu-
siness

fineness of that kind may undoubtedly be looked into to better purpose as well as with more ease in a time of health than upon a sick-bed. But considering the unhappy consequences with which the total neglect of it is often attended, better do it then (if the faculties of the body and mind will permit) than not at all. This might, at least in part, be recommended in that advice to Hezekiah in his affliction. * "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

But there are matters of more solemn and lasting importance to the sick and the dying; and it is well when they have nothing of this sort to divert their attention from them. When visited with a threatening illness it may be your prudence to consider how affairs stand between you and your fel-

* Isaiah xxxviii. 1.

low creatures for this life, but it most certainly concerns you to enquire diligently *how matters are between GOD and your own soul for eternity.* Some thought becomes you for yourself and yours for this world, but more for another; and God by affliction calls you to it to weigh well what he is doing, and to attend to the language of his Providence. The voice of his rod is *Examine yourself*; look well into your religious character, and spiritual state; search and try your ways and your heart, and beware that the pride of it does not deceive you. Self-flattery is always foolish and dangerous, but most so in affliction: and the conduct of those is equally criminal and cruel who do or say any thing to encourage it in persons of irreligious, or even of doubtful characters. Instead of administering opiates to the lethargic by admitting them to the Lord's Supper, or repeating the

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the promises of the gospel indifferently to them, let conscience now do its office freely and faithfully, and let all around exhort the afflicted to examine and try himself, and as in expectation of appearing before the tribunal of God, to say unto him "Search me O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." * Listen not I beseech you, my dearly beloved and longed for, listen not, when the hand of the Lord is upon you, to any who would deceive you by encouraging the hope of the hypocrite which will be but as a spider's web when God taketh away your soul. When threatened with a summons to call you hence, it must surely appear to you a matter of infinite importance

* Ps. cxxix. 23, 24.

to know whether you are going. For this purpose search the scriptures, and examine your state and character by them. Observe who are there spoken of as the heirs of salvation—and say then—have I that repentance; that faith; that humble fear; that holy love to which the promises of eternal life are made there in those sacred oracles? The Word of God speaks of a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, & of those (and those alone) as meet for it “who
 “are delivered from the power
 “of darkness, and translated into
 the kingdom of his dear Son.”
 Have I been so translated and transformed in the renewing of my mind? important question—pursue the enquiry. My Bible tells me “If any man be in Christ he
 “is a new creature, old things are
 “passed away, and all things are
 “become new.” Have I experi-

• Col. i. 12, 13.

enced

enced that great change? What is my heart? a heart of flesh, or is it yet a heart of stone? where are my affections? Jesus said where the treasure is there will the heart be also. Have I this reason to believe that my treasure is in heaven, that my heart is supremely, habitually there? or is it still groveling on the earth and on the things of sense and time? are my thoughts and views, desires and delights pure and spiritual, or carnal and worldly? "Know ye not, says Paul to the Corinthians (Chap. vi. ver. 9, 10.) that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God: Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor Idolators, nor Adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." Nor will a round of external forms, the knowledge

F of

of gospel truths, or a mere attendance upon gospel ordinances either entitle us to the peculiar privileges of that kingdom, or be of themselves sufficient preparatives for the enjoyment of them. Jesus and his apostles taught the necessity, the absolute necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in his dear Son; a humble dependence upon him as the Saviour, and a cordial subjection of soul and body to him as a sovereign. They tell us we are saved, if at all, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Heaven, they assure us, is a state of perfect purity and perfect love; and we are forewarned, very expressly, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Can I hope that I am thereby formed for a part and a place there? God is now dealing thus with me, as he did with Israel in the wilderness, to prove me, and try me, and to see

see what is in my heart; Have I any good reason to say with Job
 "When he hath tried me I shall
 come forth as gold?" It is said
 of many they are not known either
 to others or to themselves till they
 are tried. In the time of health
 and prosperity I have had little
 leisure to think seriously and to
 look inwardly, it is therefore very
 possible I may have remained hi-
 therto a stranger to myself; but
 God forbid that I should continue
 so any longer! I seem hastening
 into an awful eternity, am I or am
 I not prepared to go? am I in that
 state, and in that frame in which I
 could wish to be found in a dying
 hour? Is my faith, and love, and
 every grace not only sincere and
 genuine, but strong and lively, so
 that when my Lord shall say to
 me "Behold I come quickly," I
 may be able to reply "Amen,

Job xxiii, 10.

"even so come, Lord Jesus?"
The believer in such a frame has
reason to rejoice—nevertheless all
must acknowledge that

§. 3. "*Humiliation and Self-abasement* become us in such circumstances. Sinners ought ever to be lowly and contrite; but we are more especially commanded to humble ourselves when under the mighty hand of God. * "In that day † (called v. 5, a day of trouble) did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth." A gracious God has often expressed and manifested his notice of such a temper in such circumstances. Manasseh in his affliction humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers & he was intreated for him. ‡ To Josiah when in tears that

* 1 Pet. v. 6. † Is. xxii. 11.

‡ 2 Chron. xxviii. 12, 13.

message of mercy was sent. || Be-
 " cause thine heart was tender and
 " thou hast humbled thyself before
 " the Lord, and hast rent thy
 " clothes and wept before me, I
 " also have heard thee, saith the
 " Lord, and will gather thee to
 " thy fathers in peace, &c."

The following extracts from the
 diary of an afflicted christian ex-
 press the language of this humili-
 ation before God. " I will bear
 " the indignation of the Lord, I
 " know I ought to sit in silent sub-
 " mission without one murmuring
 " word, because I have sinned a-
 " gainst him. I have sinned times
 " and ways without number. My
 " sufferings bring my sins to my
 " remembrance, and call upon me
 " to humble my self at his feet as in
 " dust & ashes. Yes, O my God, I
 " deserve to suffer, and to suffer
 " infinitely more than I do, in soul
 " as well as in body; and that
 " not only on earth but in hell.

|| 2 Kings xxii. 19.

My sicknesses and pains have hitherto been short, short in comparison of my days of health and ease; and still shorter compared with what I deserve. I might, long e'er this, have been plunged into that lake of unutterable and hopeless agony where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Oh the sins that I have committed against God and man! the sins of my life and of my lips; and the still more numerous and abominable sins of my heart! Now, now does my soul weep, and well it may weep over that pride, that ingratitude, that unbelief, that worldly-mindedness; those vain, rebellious and almost blasphemous thoughts that have at one time or another lodged within me. Yes, alas, they have not only entered but lodged, and lodged long within me, and been too much indulged

“indulged by me. When the
“blessings of the gospel covenant
“have been set before me I have
“too frequently made light of
“them, & of him who suffered &
“died to procure them for me. I
“have resisted his Holy Spirit.
“And what adds more to my
“guilt in all is that I have sin-
“ned against repeated instructions
“from others and against my own
“knowledge and conscience: yea
“against my most solemn promif-
“es and vows. Instead of oppos-
“ing temptations I have readily
“complied with them; yea, in
“some instances, I have heedlessly
“if not wilfully run into the way
“of them; and have shamefully
“sighted and misimproved ma-
“ny privileges, which I should
“now embrace with pleasure;
“but alas! I am laid aside from
“them.”

Truly indeed can I say with
Dr. Watts

“Here

"Here on my heart the burden lies,
 And past offences pain my eyes.
 "My lips with shame my sins confess
 "Against thy law, against thy grace.
 "Lord should thy judgments grow severe
 "I am condemn'd, but thou art clear.
 "Yet save a suffering sinner, Lord,
 "Whole hope still hovering round thy
 word;
 "Would light on some sweet promise
 there,
 "Some sure support against despair.

These last lines are the language
 of what we are next to recom-
 mend as a duty of the afflicted—
 viz.

§. 4. *Prayer.* * "Is any afflict-
 "ed let him pray." It is his duty
 so to do; and the God in whose
 hand the rod is says by that as
 well as in his word "Call upon
 "me in the day of trouble."
 It is expected of his people that
 they should pray then with pecu-
 liar fervour. In their affliction,
 says he, they will seek me early.

* James x. 13.

† Hosea v. 15.

It

It becomes us, then, to plead with him as we have ability and opportunity, in behalf of his church; intreating the protection of his providence, and the influence of his grace for its preservation and prosperity. Then should we commit all our friends in Christ Jesus, and more especially our near relations into his hands, and implore for them the best blessings of his everlasting covenant, in the spirit of the holy patriarchs, who, on their sick and dying beds, usually called their families around them, and blessed them in the name of the Lord. * More especially does it concern us in those solemn circumstances, to pray for ourselves. To realize the hand that smites us, and to own the justice of the visitation. To acknowledge our dependence upon the Providence and Grace of God for our pre-

* Gen. xxviii 1. xlix. 1.

sent

It

sent support, and upon his mercy in Christ Jesus for our hopes of future felicity. Out of the abundance of the heart surely in such circumstances, the mouth will be opened to offer petitions suitable to them. If any are at a loss to know what to ask, and where with they shall come before the Lord, let them remember that the suffering servants of God, in obedience to his command, have been used

§. 1. *To pray for the pardon of sin, and an interest in that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure.* Sin, a painful conviction of it, upon the conscience is the bitterest ingredient in the cup of affliction. The spirit of a man may bear his bodily infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear it. It is hard to bear at any time, but most overwhelming in a time of affliction. Those that feel it then cannot but make it their first and most

most fervent prayer to be delivered from it. — “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” * Let us repeat the request daily, and urge it in the name of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, through whom, as such, the Father has been graciously pleased to promise in that covenant that he will be merciful to our unrighteousnesses and remember our sins and iniquities no more. † Nay he has engaged to admit the believer to all the honours and privileges of adoption both here and hereafter. Yes, suffering christian, an interest in that covenant will secure to you every supply of grace you need through life and in death, and a mansion, throne, a kingdom in glory. Yea

* Ps. li, 1.

† Heb. viii. 12,

if admitted among the happy people whose God is the Lord, this chastening though, for the present, it seemeth not joyous but grievous, will be crowned with immortality and glory. Be this therefore your first request. Oh for an interest in the pardoning mercy, and covenant-love of God in Christ; for a good hope through grace, under the chearful influence of the spirit of adoption, whereby I may be enabled to go to him in whose hand the rod is, and cry "Abba, " Father!" and then will I say with my dear Lord "The cup " which my Father gives me shall " I not drink it?"—Nevertheless, consistent with a filial subjection,

§. 2. *You may beg that the Lord, if it seem good to him, would remove or lighten the burden.* So Jesus himself did in an hour of trial. "Father, if it be possible, let this " cup pass from me." * Life and

* Matt. xxvi 39.

health are by no means to be despised or neglected. The Author of our frame has taught us by a kind of natural instinct, to care and labour for them. He has likewise furnished us with various means of relief and recovery when visited with afflictions. These we not only may but ought to make use of as we have opportunity. But let us never forget that the success of means and instruments depends upon a divine blessing. It is recorded to the dishonour of Aha, king of Judah, and as a caution to all the afflicted, * that "he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Why not to both? and to the latter, if at all, in subordination to the former. Good men have attended to this caution seeking the help of God; as convinced that all the skill and power of men would be in vain.

* Chron. xvi. 12.

without it. * "O spare me that I
 " may recover strength, before I
 " go hence and be no more!" But
 our petitions of this sort should be
 offered with great submission and
 humility; adding, when we have
 presented them, in the spirit and
 language of our divine Lord "Ne-
 " vertheless not as I will but as
 " thou wilt." It becomes us to
 leave the time and manner of our
 recovery to him, and indeed to
 be willing to live or die as he
 pleases; if so be we may but be
 able to say with Paul and his bre-
 thren in Christ "Whether we live
 " we live unto the Lord, and
 " whether we die we die unto the
 " Lord: whether we live there-
 " fore or die we are the Lords."

§. 3. *With Job, beg of G O D in
 affliction that he would shew you where-
 fore he contendeth with you.* It is
 of importance to know the end of

* Ps. xxxix. 13.

† Rem. xiv 8.

every

every visitation, that we may attend to it and comply with it. We have heard that the all-wise, righteous and merciful Father of the Universe has his designs in every appointment; and such as are worthy of him. But his ways, perhaps, seem to you a great deep, and his judgments past finding out. You can see but a little way into the paths of the Lord, and what you do see is as through a glass darkly. You find, it may be, already that you have mistaken his conduct in past instances, and know that you are still liable to entertain wrong apprehensions concerning it. At best you must acknowledge that you need divine direction to enable you to judge of it aright. Apply therefore for instruction to the Father of lights. "Most gracious
" Father thou dost not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men;
" but hast assured us in thine
" holy word that it is if need be

“ we are in heaviness through manifold trials; Shew me, I humbly beseech thee, on what accounts I needed this visitation, and give me to understand, and feel, and practise all it is intended to teach. What is there in my present frame, what has there been in my past temper and conduct to make this chastening expedient? What particular sins, or sinful propensities is this intended to bring to my remembrance, to humble me for, and to purify me from? A good God would not surely call me into the furnace if there was not some dross to be purged away. To what neglected duties is this to call back my forgetful, roving, trifling heart? what languishing, dying graces is this intended to revive? of what dangers is this sent to forewarn me, and against what peculiar weaknesses and enemies

"emies is it designed to guard
 "me? Lord, teach me thy will,
 "and accompany the instructions
 "of thy rod with those of thy
 "word and spirit, or the affliction
 "will leave me as ignorant and
 "heedless as it found me."

Again

§. 4. *Pray for divine support under it.* Both for our own sakes, and for the sake of our friends about us, as well for the glory of God and the honour of our holy religion we ought to be solicitous that we may bear our afflictions well. Neither despising the chastening of the Lord, nor fainting when we are rebuked of him. But we are weak and insufficient for every thing of ourselves. Unequal to the common duties of life, and should be still more unable to endure adversity without the supports and consolations of divine grace. But if we would have them we must ask for them.—He

has required that we should. We are nowhere encouraged to respect the divine presence, and still if we do not pray for it, but God has given us many gracious assurances of it if we do. He will, says Jesus, of the Father, he will give his holy Spirit the comforter to them that ask him. And we should recollect, for the encouragement of our faith and hope in prayer, the instances in which he has made good his word to his seeking servants. The experiences of such have been, and I hope still are full of them. From among many others let us select that of the apostle Paul recorded in 2 Cor. xii. He there tells us he was visited with a very painful affliction. He calls it a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. A visitation, probably, whatever it was, that seemed likely to affect his acceptance and usefulness in his publick work, and as such peculiar distressing and discouraging

discouraging to him. For (or upon the account of) this therefore, says he, I besought the Lord thrice: and he said (hear it, Oh my soul, and learn to cast thy burden upon the Lord) My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. For the support of that strength, and the consolations of that grace, let the Lord's suffering servants apply to him in the day of adversity.

Moreover they ought likewise *2 Cor. 12. 5. To pray that affliction may promote christian establishment and edification.* It is not enough that we endure chastisements with meekness and patience; they should be improved, and we ought to be the better for them. Better or worse we shall be; and our afflictions will be in mercy or in judgment, according to their influence and effects.

Be it therefore our constant and most serious concern that we may profit by them. That we and others

thers may not only see beautiful blossoms, but likewise taste pleasant and wholesome fruits growing on the rod. Let us fervently implore those influences from above which are necessary to produce them. May tribulation work patience, and patience experience and experience hope! The Lord by this affliction fit me for life and all I may have hereafter to do and to bear in it! fit me for death, whenever, or however it may come. That I may have nothing to do in that solemn hour but to commit my waiting spirit into the hands of that powerful, faithful Jesus who can and will keep what I commit to him against that day. May these moments of pain and sickness not only, in the review, add to the relish of that rest which remains for the people of God; but by their powerfully refining and spiritualizing influences on my soul prepare it to take part

part in their joys above, and to join with them in their exalted services. Or if I am spared a while longer in the body, Oh that it may appear that I have not been in the furnace in vain. God of his infinite mercy grant that I may not come out of it, like the clay, more hardened. I wish, I long to say with Job, * of my Heavenly Father "He knoweth the way that I take, when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." More beautiful, more valuable, more useful; as being thereby abundantly purified. — Thus, when afflicted, let us pray. Pray for ourselves; not forgetting the circumstances of any around us who either desire or need our remembrance: and ask the prayers of others for us when we can no longer pray for them or ourselves.

Moreover we are commanded in the word of God

* Job xxiii. 10.

§. 6. To be patient in Tribulation. * The trial may seem heavy, and long. You have poured out your soul before God in the language of the psalmist (xlvii. 7.) "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But if you complain to God, don't complain of him. You may feel, nor are you forbid to weep. There is nothing in that inconsistent with patience, nay you could not be patient if you were not a sufferer. It is happy when tribulation worketh patience. And patience if it has its perfect work will not allow you to murmur, to speak, to think hardly of your lot, or of God who has assigned it to you. Though hope be long deferred, and not only wearisome nights but wearisome

* Rom. xii. 12. 1 Tim. vi. 11. James i. 4.
2 Pet. i. 6. Luke xxi. 19

months

months are appointed, you, patience teaches long-suffering—That indeed is but another word for it. It is the Lord, said a devout sufferer, let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight. I will wait his time, and endure all his pleasure. Oh that I may not so much as wish him to shorten or lighten the stroke before he sees fit. That I may never do or say any thing that would betray a peevish infidel discontent and anxiety. He that believes, says the word of God, and I may add who-soever is patient, will not make haste. Oh the wretched impatience of Saul and Judas; and of all, who like them, who have hastened their end. The Lord keep me from attempting it, or thinking of it but with the utmost abhorrence. The Lord keep me from saying to him, like an Insolent murmurer: What dost thou? May I rather

have

have to say with David, * on a review of my trial, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth because thou didst it." Thus Aaron, the Lord's priest, behaved under a very painful visitation. "Aaron held his peace." † And thus my suffering Lord, of whom it is said, ‡ "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," May his disciples be like their Master. We are reminded that he has herein set us an example that we should follow his steps. || And it is our duty so to do. "Strike Lord, (said Luther) and spare not; I have learned to say my Amen to thy Amen. Thou hast a greater interest in me than I have in myself: I am ready to receive any impression thou shalt stamp upon me."

* Ps. xxxix. 3. † Lev. x. 3. ‡ Is. liii. 7.
|| 1 Pet. ii. 21.

What would impatience avail? could we expect by the fretfulness of our spirits, by our passionate exclamations, or our angry tossings to and fro to compel the Almighty to withdraw his hand? or to extricate ourselves from his chastenings by violence? Vain presumption! as the clay, as entirely and absolutely as that is in the hand of the potter, so are we in the hands of the Lord our God. He can and he will do with us as seemeth good in his sight. It is therefore, as Solomon very justly observeth, It is the foolishness of man that perverteth his way when his heart fretteth against the Lord. * Such a spirit has a natural tendency to increase the pain, and lengthen the period of our afflictions, as the fretting steed at once galls and wearies himself by his impatience, and the tossings of a wild bull in a net only entangle him the more.

* Prox. xix. 3.

H

And

And God cannot but be displeased with such a spirit under his chastenings, he would thereby be either provoked to increase them, or, in judgment to leave the poor foolish creature, and to say of him as of ancient Ephraim, Let him alone. That message to Israel is in this view full of instruction and caution "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." But God is a God of patience, *The God of patience*, His word and his conduct proves him so. His conduct to others, and his conduct to us, to this we owe it that we are not consumed. We cannot surely so pervert the truth as to make it an encouragement to impatience. Rather, my brethren, let us be imitators of God as dear children, and consider his patience towards us an obligation upon us to exer-

• Isaiah i. 5.

cise

And God cannot but be displeased
 with us. Do we, can we forget
 that we owe it to his patience that
 we are out of hell? and shall a
 living man complain? a man for
 the punishment (and what is at
 most a very light punishment) of
 his sins? Whatever our sufferings
 are; though they may seem heavy
 and numerous and long continu-
 ed, we must acknowledge they
 are less than our iniquities have
 deserved. The wages of sin is
 death. The demerit of our sins
 everlasting destruction; and shall
 we complain of God as now deal-
 ing unjustly or severely with us?
 Rather let each say under the rod
 "I will bear the indignation of
 the Lord, because I have sinned
 against him." * Or in the lan-
 guage and spirit of Luther "I will
 bear the pruning-knife, if I may
 but escape the hewing axe,"

* Lam. iii. 29. Micah vii. 9.

That expression suggests another hint to recommend to the suffering christian a patient submission to his Father's rod, viz. that it is in loving-kindness; to do him good in the latter end. The happy fruits of afflictions, as before mentioned, should be reviewed here to recommend patience under them, and an earnest concern to have every desiræable end answered by them: that they may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness here, and work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory hereafter. If productive of such good, it is a sufficient reason not only to endure them, but to bless God for them. What many of his suffering servants have enjoyed in their afflictions has taught them to bear them with patience, & to review them with thankfulness.

“ Had I, (said a good man) had
 “ I been without my sharpest tri-
 “ als, I should have been without

“ my

my sweetest comforts. No wonder if such an one is patient. But more than patience becomes us viz.

§. 6. *A cordial subjection to GOD, and a resignation of all we are and have to his disposal.* We are not only to endure present chastening, but to give up ourselves and our all to a chastizing God and say to him "Do with us and ours as seemeth good in thy sight." "We not only commit ourselves to thy care but resign our persons, our property, our friends, and every comfort to thy wise and righteous disposal."

All the people of God have thus yielded up themselves unto him in seasons of health and prosperity. They have done it in private; and, if not negligent of their duty, have done it publickly, with their brethren in Christ Jesus, at his table. The Lord, in afflictions, puts their sincerity in these engagements to a trial; and

indeed calls his servants to a solemn renewal and ratification of them. "You have laid yourselves at my feet; have resigned yourselves to my government and disposal. You have said do with us & ours as seemeth good in thy sight. Our health, our friends, our all we commit into thy hands & refer to thy direction & controul. We are willing to want what thou withholdest, to resign what thou takest away, and to bear what thou seekest to lay upon us. I will now prove thee whether thou hast said this from thy heart, and art still of the same mind. Canst thou say now the will of the Lord be done. Done with and upon me and mine." Thus, we are informed, Job submitted to the hand and rod of God under repeated and very painful strokes of it. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed

"be

“be the name of the Lord. In all
 “this Job sinned not, nor charged
 “God foolishly.” * And thus our
 Blessed Redeemer: “Not as I will
 “but as thou wilt, the cup which
 “my Father hath given me shall
 “I not drink it?” It certainly
 becomes us so to say and so to do,
 knowing it is in the hand, and
 given us by the appointment, of
 an infinitely wise, holy, righteous,
 just and good God whose way is
 equal, † and who has a right to do
 with us both as his creatures, and
 the subjects of his moral govern-
 ment as he pleases, nay who will
 do all his pleasure. “Woe to him
 “that striveth with his maker.”
 To attempt it would discover e-
 qual presumption and folly. A
 temper disposed to break through
 every tye of honour, interest and
 gratitude, and directly opposite to
 that required of his people again

* Job i. 21, 22,

† Ezek. xviii. 25.

and

and again in his word. An eminent divine of the last century being asked wherein true gospel holiness consists, answered after a short pause, "In a mind swallowed up in the will of God." Such a frame of mind is particularly, frequently and fervently recommended to all his people as his children. "If I be a father," he says to them, "where is mine honour? † And farther to reconcile them to his chastisements he assures them that they are ever the fruits of paternal wisdom, faithfulness and love; and that his beloved are visited with them only when and in such ways and measures as he sees necessary and good for them. "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth:

† Mol. i. 6.

“If ye endure chastening, God
 “dealeth with you as with sons
 “&c. We have had fathers of
 “our flesh which corrected us and
 “we gave them reverence, shall
 “we not much rather be in sub-
 “jection to the Father of spirits
 “and live?”† It is equally our
 duty and our interest so to be, for
 who hath ever hardened his heart
 against God and hath prosper-
 ed? — Who shall say to him
 What dost thou? Let us rather
 sit in silence under the rod. Or
 whenever we open our mouths,
 pour out all our souls in the
 language of lowly and cordial
 submission, of the most humble
 and dutiful affection! as those that
 that are willing, nay rejoice to be,
 do and suffer all his pleasure. A
 just sense of our own demerit will
 dispose us to this. Having for-
 feited every enjoyment, and de-

† Heb. xii. 6—11.

served

served to be cast into hell it would
 ill become us to complain or think
 hardly of what we at present en-
 dure; especially if we have any
 good hope through grace for an
 interest in God as our God, and
 for a part in that covenant which
 is ordered in all things and sure.
 Seneca, a heathen moralist, per-
 suaded his friend Polybius, whom
 the Emperor Cæsar had honoured
 with marks of distinguishing fa-
 vour, to endure the afflictions pa-
 tiently with which he was exer-
 cised, urged this consideration
 "It is not, said he, for that man to
 "complain that has Cæsar for his
 "friend." Much less should the
 christian who has the Lord for his
 God. Whose are all the measures
 of grace; whom that grace in Christ
 Jesus has begotten again to a lively
 hope of an everlasting inheritance,
 for whose good that grace is so
 ver-ruling these present afflictions
 as that they shall work out for him
 a far

a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—“Let me, said a suffering christian, let me but have God for my father, Jesus for my saviour, and heaven for my portion and I shall be happy though I be stricken with boils like Job, and be obliged in that condition to beg my bread like Lazarus.” And when thus happy we cannot but be resigned. Cannot but be willing that our all should be ever at the divine disposal.

As was a good man who being asked, when on a sick-bed, whether he wished to live or die, answered “Which God pleaseth.” But said his friend, if God was to refer it to you which would you chuse? He replied “Truly if God was to refer it to me, I would refer it to him again and say to him “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” This is resignation to God. But how seldom do we feel and discover

ver it. Lament it, O my soul, thou may'st justly be both grieved and ashamed that though so often called to it, and it has been recommended to thee by so many amiable examples and weighty motives — Yea though thou hast professed it so often when saying before the Lord “Thy will be done,” he to whom thou hast said it, has seen so much rebellion and disobedience rising and working within, so much of a disposition to take the reins of government out of his hand, and to dictate to infinite wisdom, faithfulness and goodness. Oh my God, pity my weakness, pardon my guilt, and bring every thought into subjection.

“I charge my thoughts, be humble still,

“And all my carriage mild:

“Content, my Father, with thy will,

“And quiet as a child.

“The patient soul, the lowly mind

“Shall have a large reward;

“Let saints in sorrow lie resigned,

“And trust a faithful Lord.”

This

This leads us to recommend
to his suffering servants

§. 7. "Faith and hope in their
"G O D and Redeemer." These are

graces peculiar to seasons of trial;
and those seasons in which not on-
ly sense but reason likewise is inca-
pable of fathoming the depths of di-
vine counsels and conduct. When
comforts that we much desired, &
such as may appear very valuable
and important are removed or
withheld, and the ways of God
seem not only painful but severe,
then are we to remember that it is
good for a man to hope and quiet-
ly wait for the salvation of God. *

To realize his presence and provi-
dence, and to rely on the assuran-
ces of his almighty power, uner-
ring wisdom, invariable faithful-
ness and everlasting love. "Verily
"God is good. Though clouds
"and darkness may be round a-
"bout him or his dealings with

* Lam. iii. 26

“ me, yet I know he will do right:
“ and therefore I must, I will say
“ of all he does with me and mine
“ It is well: faith assures me it can-
“ not be otherwise. And if I am
“ not able to discern the ne-
“ cessity and benefit of this trial
“ now, I doubt not but I shall
“ hereafter: shall have reason to
“ acknowledge with everlasting
“ joy and thankfulness, if I get
“ safe to a better world, that he
“ has been leading me a right way,
“ through this, to that city of ha-
“ bitation.” The doctrines and
promises of the everlasting gospel
recommend a spirit and a language
like this to every christian believ-
er. They teach such to look upon
their afflictions not only as consist-
ent with their interest in the love
of God, but an evidence and fruit
of it; not only as what may do
them no real injury, but as highly
subservient, and indeed essential
to their spiritual and eternal wel-
fare.

The

The covenant and the oath of God, through the blood of the Mediator his dear Son, may confirm our faith and hope in this great truth; That all things shall work together for good to them that love Him, the called according to his purpose.† Nor should we stagger at the promise through unbelief; but, as the genuine children of Abraham, be strong in faith giving glory to God. He has said, he has done much to encourage our reliance upon him for the accomplishment of it. He condescends to call himself our father, and expresses a sacred complacency and delight in his people as his children; assuring them of his paternal compassion in all their distresses, of support and comfort in them, and a final and compleat deliverance out of them all, “As a father pities his children so

† Rom. viii. 28.

“the Lord pities them that fear
 “him.” † There is in that pas-
 sage, as in our Lord’s animating
 exhortation to his disciples record-
 ed Matt. vii. an appeal to the
 bowels of mercies in the parent’s
 heart especially towards a dear
 child in affliction. It has ever shar-
 ed his paternal affection: but then
 its sicknesses, pains and dangers
 excite the tenderest emotions in
 his heart, he feels with him and
 for him in every struggle, watches
 every symptom with an anxious
 eye, and thinks nothing too good
 to part with, nothing too hard
 to perform for his relief. “I
 “will be his father and he shall
 “be my son; if he commit in-
 “iquity, I will chastise him with
 “the rod of men, and with the
 “stripes of the children of men;
 “nevertheless my mercy shall
 “not depart from him.” * The

† Ps. ciii, 13.

* 2 Sam. vii. 14.

“ Lord

" Lord thy God will strengthen
 " thee on the bed of languish-
 " ing; he will make all thy bed in
 " thy sickness. The Lord thy God
 " in the midst of thee is mighty;
 " he will save, he will rejoice o-
 " ver thee with joy; he will rest
 " in his love; he will joy over
 " thee with singing." || He will —
 he assures thee that he will. And
 canst thou not, christian believer,
 wilt thou not take his word? " He
 " that spared not his own son
 " but delivered him up for us all,
 " how shall he not with him also
 " freely give us all things?" * Af-
 ter such a testimony of his love,
 such an earnest of our future inhe-
 ritage can we doubt of receiving
 necessary support or supplies by
 the way? God forbid! The Lord
 will provide. " The Lord will
 " give grace and glory, and no
 " good thing will he withhold from

|| Zeph. iii. 7. * Rom. viii. 32.

"them that walk uprightly." Many who have been enabled to walk by faith, embracing the promise, have left behind them very pleasing and animating testimonies of its accomplishment and mighty energy through God to uphold and rejoice the mind in the most trying seasons. When the persecutors of Polycarp (the angel or minister of the church at Smyrna) were going to tie him to the stake around which they were kindling a fire to burn him, he said to them "Let me alone, the God who has given me courage to come to the fire will enable me, unbound, to endure the flame."

A language somewhat similar to that of those three great men of God Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, who when threatened by the haughty tyrant of Babylon with the fiery furnace calmly re-

plied "Be it for our God whom
 "we serve is able to deliver us
 "from the burning fiery furnace,
 "and he will deliver us out of
 "thine hands, O king." * May the
 servants of the Lord be enabled to
 manifest the like precious faith and
 hope in every trial! Nor forget
 it is also required of them, viz.

§. 8. *"To abound in Thanksgiving."*

—The people of God have much
 to be thankful for, in prosperity
 and in adversity, in health and in
 sickness, in life and in death, Nor
 let us forget, or be unwilling to
 sing of mercy in the midst of judg-
 ment,

"I will complain yet praise,

"While I bewail, approve:

"And all my dark, bright days

"I will lament and love.

HERBERT.

The mercy of the Lord with re-
 spect to the body and the interests

* Dan. iii. 17.

of

of time ought undoubtedly to be acknowledged then.—Let us praise him that he has spared and upheld us so long — and speak well of his name for all the many days of health, ease, and comfort with which he has indulged us. We should be ungrateful indeed to suffer present moments of pain to swallow up all our past years of health and enjoyment. Nor ought we, by any means, to overlook the many mercies with which we are surrounded even in seasons of Affliction. It is matter of thanksgiving that it is not heavier, or more complicated ; that it has been of no longer continuance, and that it did not prove fatal in its first attack ; that we have means of relief and support under it ; and friends to sympathize with us, and perform for us those offices of humanity and kindness without which the burden of affliction would be insupportable. It would ill become
us

us, in any seasons of trial, to be unmindful of such mercies as these. But we have better blessings to acknowledge; spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. How valuable the discoveries of gospel-grace in a day of adversity! If David could rejoice in the comparatively few and imperfect discoveries of that grace that were made to the church in his day, and speak of them as his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, and as sweeter than hony or the hony-comb. What is our privilege, and how abundant our occasions of joy and thanksgiving for all those exceeding great and precious promises, and the many dear and full manifestations of life and immortality with which we are favoured in the Discourses of Christ and his Apostles! In an hour of pain and sickness let us bless God for the Bible; and every doctrine, precept, invitation
and

and promise of mercy contained in it. Much reason have we to be thankful for that to read when deprived of the benefit of public ordinances. How many of the servants of God have gratefully acknowledged with the pious psalmist † “This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.” And not a few may perhaps add with him “Unless thy law had been my delight I had perished in my affliction.” †

When confined from the house of God let us not forget the many months and (perhaps) years of sabbaths which some of us have enjoyed there—We have peculiar reason to recollect them with pleasure and thankfulness if ordinances were made the means of imparting divine light and life to our souls for their instruction and sup-

† Ps. cxix. 50. † 92.

port when we can no longer go up with the multitude that keep holy-day. Never indeed can we sufficiently admire the love or extol the exceeding greatness of that power which not only proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation in our ears, but opened our hearts (if they have ever been opened) to embrace and obey the gospel, to admit the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let our thoughts be much in affliction on this grace; engaged in lively and enlarged contemplations upon it, and the most grateful acknowledgments of it. When we realize the great the inestimable blessings hereby secured to us for time and eternity; when we think on whom they are bestowed, and recollect what it cost the Son of God to obtain them, we cannot but each charge our hearts with a devout and thankful remembrance of the great love

love wherewith he loved us in the language of David "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name; bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Affliction ought by no means to interrupt the song. Rejoice in tribulation. Many of the servants of God have had great reason to praise him not only while under the rod, but for it; and most of all for some of its most painful visitations. They have yielded to them the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And Oh the holy admiration with which they will all look back upon them when, on their release from the body, they find that this light affliction which is but for a moment has been forming them for the enjoyment of God, and all the exalted services of the heavenly world.—Suffering Christian, Let the prospect of that bliss

bliss, not only reconcile thee to what thy God is doing to prepare thee for it, but teach thee to praise him for all; (knowing that present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us) and to begin those sacred exercises which may be training thee up for thine everlasting business and bliss. —

Once more, let the afflicted remember it is their duty, when able,

§. 9. *To impart seasonable instruction to all about them.* The spirit we maintain and manifest then, if it be what it ought to be, will be itself a useful lesson to our surrounding friends. A dying saint said to his family, “I have formerly taught you how to live, “I am now teaching you (meaning by his example) how to “die.” It will be peculiarly happy when we can do this both in the manner of our behaviour and

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the strain of our conversation. A word spoken in season how good is it! Every one will acknowledge serious counsel seasonable in such circumstances; and as he that gives it then speaks with peculiar advantage, he may hope the impressions made will be more lasting and salutary. At least it becomes every one to attempt it in the best manner he is able. Recommend to others what you have found the best preparative for a sick-bed, and the best relief and comfort in it. Instructions grounded on the observations and experience of a sick friend, are generally heard attentively and retained long. Endeavour therefore when in such circumstances to impress upon the minds of those around you a serious sense of the evil of sin—and to enforce a constant and close watchfulness against it—Bespeak a diligent attention to the word of God, and a sacred veneration of
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all the ordinances of the gospel; press upon them a conscientious regard for every truth revealed, and duty enjoined in it, by all the solemn and endearing considerations there urged to recommend them: especially by tender and affecting representations of the vanity of human life and nature, and the extreme folly of deferring the great preparatives for another world to a sick and dying bed.

Besides these general instructions of equal importance to all, it is our duty to pay the best attention we can to the several ages, characters and circumstances of those about us; and to drop hints of advice, caution, admonition, or encouragement as may be most needed; or, in the language of scripture, let us endeavour to give to every one his portion in due season. To the young and to the aged, to the rich and to the poor; to them who appear to have some

good thing in them towards the Lord their God, and to such as we have reason to fear are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity; or of whom the best we can say or hope is that they are not far from the kingdom of God. More especially if we cannot but apprehend this of some to whom we have been nearly related; and whose interests the ties of nature or friendship have closely connected with our own.

Perhaps we may be able to speak to them with more freedom, and they may be disposed to hear us more attentively in affliction than when we and they were surrounded with the smiles of Providence, or entangled with the cares of the world.

An opportunity so favourable ought not however to be neglected—it will afford us some satisfaction, if called away from them, to know that we have endeavour-
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to instruct others.

113

ed to be faithful to them, in our last moments; and it will add much to their comfort and our own if, from what good effects we discover of our well-intended instructions, we can leave them with a more chearful hope of seeing them again in a better world.

CHAP. V.

Exhortations to the Afflicted in different Circumstances, Ages and Stations; and whose Afflictions have arisen more immediately from different Causes.

§. 1. **T**O Persons under Afflictions in different circumstances.

1. *To the rich.* God has given you not only sufficient food and raiment, but many of the conveniences and delights of [life, and

114 *Instructions to the Rich*

placed you above various wants and sorrows which lie heavy upon multitudes of your fellow creatures. Yet the wish of true friendship is that you may not have all your good things here. You see, you feel now the truth of that remark of Solomon * who rolled in wealth, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." They cannot secure from pain and sickness, they cannot remove the rod or lighten the strokes of it. You have it indeed in your power to secure assistance & accommodations that others want. Be thankful to God for them, ask his blessing with & upon them; and remember that, as the stewards of his manifold gifts, it is required of you that you be found faithful. Have you been so hitherto? The hand of God upon you is now calling you to the inquiry: It is warning you of an approaching

* Prov. xi. 4.

judgment

Judgment. In a little while, and your Lord will issue out the awful order "Give an account of thy stewardship for thou mayest be no longer steward." Art thou prepared for the summons? All your wealth will avail you nothing, nor would it if it was ten times more than it is at his tribunal. Avail—did I say? nay it will appear a dreadful aggravation of your guilt, if you are found then an unfaithful or an unprofitable servant. Now therefore look over your talents and consider how you have employed them. And you will do well to take into your account, for your Lord remembers all the advantages you have, or might have derived from your superior circumstances; advantages for doing good to others, and for securing blessings of the highest value and importance to yourselves. Are any the better for them? are you? Riches in some instances

116 *Instructions to the Rich*

instances prove a curse rather than a blessing. The possessors so pervert the use and design of them as to make them the sad occasions of misery to themselves and all about them. Jesus often forewarned his disciples of the snares & dangers with which they are attended. He represents, in a celebrated parable, a rich man as, after death, in hell lifting up his eyes being in torments; and says in another place, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The figure is strong and very alarming: especially as the language of Jesus. But he by no means intends in it to assert the absolute impossibility of their salvation. There have been and still are those who, resisting and overcoming the temptations of high rank and affluent circumstances, set their affections on things above,

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not on things on the earth; who are rich in faith and in good works: And the word of God represents all such as heirs of eternal life. May you have in those fruits of the spirit, the earnest of your inheritance; and by present sufferings, be made meet to partake of durable riches and righteousness at the right hand of God. If you survive this trial, may you come forth as gold from the furnace, more beautiful and more valuable, more humble, holy and heavenly minded: if removed by it may it be to the joy of your Lord. Permit me only to add that as there is but one common salvation, so there is but one favour for the poor and the rich; and one method of application equally important and necessary to both, namely by Faith; for he that believeth on the Son hath life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on

on him. I will now offer a few
Hints.

2. *To the afflicted Poor.* And
are there not some who, to the
burdens of poverty and affliction,
have the additional load of a guilty
conscience, that are miserable
here, and have nothing to expect
but misery, and that for ever
hereafter? If this, reader, is thy
condition I cannot but feel for thee.
But it is very little the pity of
your best friends can effect. Their
sympathy may dispose them for
some offices of tenderness and be-
neficence, which it may not be in
their power to perform; but if e-
very thing is done that man can
do for you, nothing short of an
exertion of power and grace di-
vine can give you effectual and
lasting relief. And if you would
obtain that you must pray for it.—
But do you feel your need of that
grace? with which of all the evils
that attend you, are you most sen-
sibly

sibly affected. The straightness of your circumstances, the affliction of your body, or the guilty and diseased state of your soul? you cannot be insensible of the former; but, if in your right mind, the latter will pain and alarm you most. To want necessary supplies for the body, especially when visited with painful afflictions is grievous; but a soul on the borders of eternity, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, is a still more pitiable spectacle: perishing under the disease of sin; and in this condition either crying out in agony, "O how can I escape the damnation of hell? how shall I endure everlasting burnings?" or, which to a serious and thoughtful friend is still more alarming, utterly insensible of its condition, and unapprized of its danger. Is either of these your state? The apostle Paul said of himself and his

his brethren, * "If in this life on-
" ly we have hope in Christ, we
" are of all men most miserable;"
and have not you often adopted his
language. He meant it not as the
language of complaint, nor should
you utter it as such; whether born
to poverty or, like Job, reduced
by a bereaving Providence. That
good man could say in the want of
all things "The Lord gave and
" the Lord hath taken away, bles-
" sed be the name of the Lord."
Though it is by no means inconsis-
tent with the most perfect content-
ment in present circumstances to
provide for an hereafter. Having
no continuing city, Paul and Job
sought one to come; and will not
you; If you have neglected it
hitherto, it is high time to awake
out of sleep—arise and call upon
your God if so be that he will
think upon you that you perish.

1 Cor. xvi 19.

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not — if already alarmed, it is your mercy, and may afford you encouragement to know that he is condescending and full of compassion. Your poverty and misery will not hinder your acceptance with him; if enabled to apply as becomes one in your condition and character in the name of his dear Son he will not reject your petition, he will in no wise cast you out. The poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And in that Gospel many exceeding great and precious promises to encourage their humble and believing applications to a throne of grace. “The Lord
“heareth the poor.”† “God hath
“chosen the poor of this world,
“rich in faith, and heirs of the
“kingdom which he has promised
“to them that love him.” The well
grounded hope of that Glory will
carry you with composure and joy

† Ps. lxix. 33.

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through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and will support and comfort you in all the necessities and sufferings you may endure in your way to it. Only take heed that your hope be built on that foundation which God hath laid in Sion, for whosoever relieth thereupon shall never be ashamed.

§. 2. It is our duty and will be greatly to our advantage to hear the rod in *Every Period* of life in which afflictions overtake us.

1. *In Youth.* — Pain and sickness come early to many, and to some with a blessing. Solomon says the rod and reproof give wisdom. If his observation be just of an earthly Parent's, much more of that in the hand of our heavenly Father. Hear it, my young Friend, and apply thine heart to understand the wise counsels, the salutary cautions, and faithful admonitions it is intended to convey. Then wil you say also with him it is good

good to bear the yoke in our youth; more conducive to real happiness than a long season of uninterrupted health and prosperity. Far from complaining of thy days of confinement, and the wearisome nights that have been appointed unto thee, thou wilt bless God for them as the means of breaking the bonds of thy captivity, and opening upon thee the privileges, and hopes of the children of God. Perhaps before, thine heart was set upon every vain amusement & carnal gratification, thou art now taught to despise them as empty and low, & to dread and shun them as painful in the reflection and fatal in their consequences. The Lord has hereby formed thee to a taste for pleasures that are solid, satisfactory and enduring, and given thee some enjoyment of them. Pleasures derived from God himself; which bring down the beginnings of heaven into the soul, and fit it for a

part and place in his presence where there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. *

Before this warning of human frailty you was laying your account for months and years to come. Saying within yourself, Soul thou hast much goods, or strength sufficient, for many years; and if a serious friend bespoke your attention to spiritual and eternal things you would put them off to a distant period and say "It will be
" time enough to think of those
" affairs when I am threescore, or
" upon a sick-bed. Oh childish trifling! Oh foolish presumption! foolish you now see it in every view. A creature so frail to expect such a length of days, liable to be called away at an hour's, at a moment's warning; or to be rendered incapable of the necessary

* Read Dr. Watts's Hymn B.*II. Hy. x. & xi.

preparatives

preparatives for eternity though apprehensive of the summons for weeks and months before it be executed. Thus it might have been with thee. Bless God it is not; if thou hast reason to hope that this affliction will not be unto death: more especially if it be for his glory, and prove the means of imparting salutary instruction to thy soul in early life. But whatever the event be whether life or death, if it has awakened thee to serious thought for thy soul, led thee into a thorough knowledge of thyself, and of that Jesus whom to know is life eternal; If it has brought thee to thy knees, and opened thy mouth and heart in humble and fervent prayer before God: If it has engaged thee to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, again I say unto thee thou hast found it good to bear the yoke in thy youth. Thou wilt have reason

to acknowledge it to have been so through life, and especially in death whenever the change comes. And if called soon to take thy leave of earth, and every connection thou hast formed or expected in it, when thus betimes trained up for heaven, and begotten again to a lively hope of it thou mayest not only submit to the change but welcome it with abundant joy. "It is too soon (said holy Baxter) "it is too soon to go to hell at a hundred, but not too soon to go to heaven at twenty." Have you not heard or read of pious youths, nay children, on a sick-bed that were willing to be absent from the body; willing to leave the world, resign their all in it, and every expectation they had been encouraged to entertain from it: who desired, yea longed to depart and to be with Christ as what they were persuaded they should find far better? One would rather

ther envy than pity them, even under the severest sufferings, with such supports, such consolations, such prospects. If you desire them for yourself in the like circumstances seek them where they found them, in the same God, in the same Jesus, and from the same Spirit. Solid support, strong consolation in sickness, and the hour of death is to be found no where else.

Youthful pleasures have proved piercing thorns to many on their dying-beds; may you never be wounded by them there!

2. *Attend to the voice of Afflictions if overtaken by them in the midst of your days.* When your hands are full of business, and your heads full of cares; when your connections seem important and your interests various; when actually embarked in many weighty undertakings, and you are forming schemes for others still more extensive; when
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your strength seems most firm, your life most desirable, your own prospects as well as those of your friends for you appear most flattering; even in that very day perhaps may the hand of the Lord be upon you and e'er you are aware lay you aside from all. The busy tradesman, the ingenious artist, the laborious husbandman, the industrious housewife secluded perhaps suddenly from scenes and transactions that afforded sensible enjoyment and sanguine expectations: no longer capable of activity or any of the pleasures it once yielded. Sick & in pain, enfeebled and brought low; surrounded indeed with tender and beloved friends sorrowing over you; weeping for themselves lest in a little while they should see your face no more. Alas! the painful stroke! with what a loss does it threaten us? Aye but ask thyself, sufferer, how is it like to prove to thee?

thee? loss or gain? Alarming, distressing and mortifying as the stroke may seem it is inflicted with a kind design to do thee good in thy latter end, to do thee good now and for ever. Amidst thy various avocations thou hast had little leisure for reflection and forethought, now thou hast time for both: Improve it. The hand of God has laid thee aside from the cares and labours of life that thou mayest remember one thing is needful, and chuse that better part which can never be taken away from thee. Many an anxious thought, and many a painful hour thou hast probably employed for food and raiment, and to lay up treasures on earth, now thou seeest how little either would profit a soul that is not rich towards God. By this affliction therefore thou art called upon to lay up treasure in heaven, and to set thine affections on things above. It is said of a great Prince
that

190 *Afflictions in Old-Age.*

that, aware of the tendency both of his cares and honours to make him unmindful of his immortality, he ordered one of his attendants to come to him daily with this memento "Thou art a mortal man." Was you in danger of forgetting this serious truth? a kind messenger is now sent to bring it to your remembrance: May it be attended with those divine teachings that will prepare you for the event of the affliction, whether life or death! Then will you say with the sacred Psalmist "Blessed, O Lord, is the man whom thou chastenest," tho' in the midst of his days and in the midst of his enjoyments, "and teachest him out of thy law."

Some few hints, permit me to add

3. *To those who are visited with affliction in old-age.* Behold now I am old said Isaac; and if near your threescore years and ten you may say with him, I know not the day of

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of my death. * That day is indeed ever uncertain to all, but cannot be far from you. The present visitation is to forewarn you of it. You have probably had many warnings before—Warnings from the word, and from the Providence of God, from what has befallen others; and what you have felt yourself. How have they been attended to and improved? What good end has been answered by past privileges and trials? In a little while and they must be accounted for before the Tribunal of an omniscient and a righteous Judge. Yes in a little while—this sickness may be thy last—The messenger of God to separate soul and body, to consign the latter to the earth as it was, and to summon the spirit before Him that gave it. Think therefore in what manner and to what end you have spent all your

* Gen. xxviii. 2.

days

days before the end come. What are others, what are you the better for them, and for all that you have enjoyed, and done and suffered in them? I ask you as a dying creature how does life, how does death, how does eternity appear to you? What are your real sentiments of yourself, of what you now are and of what you are like to be? You have had a long day; has the great business of it been left unfinished, unattempted till the evening? It is said of the aged saint that he is gathered in as a shock of corn fully ripe in his season. The cultivation bestowed upon him has not been in vain. Under the showers of heaven, and the sweet beams of the Sun of Righteousness he has been made fit to be gathered in by the Lord of the harvest, and laid up in his garner. If your soul is in such a state you need not be unwilling, nay you may be very glad to be cut down

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down. "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly; Release my waiting longing soul from this feeble, decayed, tottering tabernacle of flesh and blood. A poor weary weather-beaten pilgrim longs to be at his journey's end. After a tedious and hazardous voyage, driven this way and that, sometimes becalmed, sometimes among rocks and shallows, and then again tossed up and down by the winds and waves. O how shall I rejoice to catch a sight of my desired haven! what sacred transports will fill my soul the moment I set my feet on the promised land! The moment I behold my Redeemer and Lord in glory. This is my God, I have waited for him, I will rejoice and be glad in his salvation.—Such are the hopes and joys of the dying faint!

- " But lo! the aged sinner goes,
" Laden with guilt and full of woes
" Down to the regions of the dead
" With endless curses on his head."

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He has been every year treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, by disobeying the commands, despising the mercy, and defying the vengeance of the Lord. Have you, my reader, continued to or near your threescore years and ten in such a state of impenitence & hardness of heart, & will you not bless God that, instead of calling you suddenly away in your sins, he is now giving you another warning of your approaching change? that he is now allowing you space for repentance? Oh that you may know and improve the day of your visitation, every hour of it.—But harden not your heart any longer. Is not the time past, a life of so many years, sufficient, and more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh? Indeed, indeed it is high time to awake out of sleep. You have interests of everlasting importance depending; and depending it may be on a few days, possibly on a few
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few hours. "Death forgotten in youth, says Dr. Young, is folly, in age, madness. When infirmity drives the world from us, or disease confines us to our chamber shall we not retire with the Father of Spirits, and the Searcher of hearts? shall we not leave the world, before the world leaves us? it is dismal to be left." "I am never so struck, adds he, with the weakness and depravity of man, as when I see grey hairs playing the fool; chasing shadows, rushing on the brink of a precipice, and wilfully turning his back on his only hope, his God, his Saviour." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God and he will abundantly
M 2 "pardon."

is pardon." Say not it is too late. Better late than never. Jesus, the Lord of Life, spake of the servant as accepted and rewarded that came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. But art thou willing to come? to come to him that thou mayest have life? willing to leave all? yes I say all, and to come to him in the way he has appointed? as a weeping penitent, lamenting thy manifold transgressions, to seek thy pardon through his atoning blood, and the sanctification of thy polluted nature by the Spirit of his grace. Then hast thou to remember, even now, for thine encouragement, that he has said "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But if you persist in despising his mercy, and still refuse to hearken to his admonitions I must leave with you that solemn warning "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly

suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

§. 3. We proceed to offer some hints to the afflicted in different stations and connections, especially Parents and Ministers. An all-wise and good God, having intended us for Society, has connected us by various ties, natural, civil and religious: many of them are of tender and of great importance. But the tenderest and most important of them are liable to dissolution; and are often dissolved when most seems depending on their continuance, and the highest expectations are raised from them.—Not now to mention other relations we shall apply the remark and some instructions upon it.

1. To Parents. I will suppose my Reader the head of a numerous family, laid aside from all capacity of acting or caring for them by some painful or weakening disorder. The hand and rod of God is calling off your attention and soli-

exclude from all around you to
 yourself. — “No, methinks I hear
 you reply, I am more thought-
 ful and concerned now than e-
 ver. I am not so distressed at the
 thought of dying on my own ac-
 count as on theirs, I hope, thro’
 grace, it will be well with me
 when God calls me away; and
 therefore I should be willing and
 desirous rather to be absent
 from the body and to leave a
 world of sin and trouble to be
 with Christ which is far better.
 But these dear Children! I have
 a thousand anxious cares and
 distressing fears for them. The
 world they are rising up into is
 thick-set with enemies and dan-
 gers that prove fatal to many —
 And if they should be ruined
 by them! They need my assist-
 ance for the body and this life
 and still more to guide their
 unexperienced steps into the
 way everlasting. And to be
 left

left friends surrounded with
a thousand Betrayers! This
thought adds inexpressibly to
the burden and anguish of my
own sufferings. But ought it
to do? The duty and affection
of the Parent call you to think,
and labour, and provide for them
in the best manner you are able:
& I hope you have done it both for
this world and a better. But why
all this anxiety and sorrow on
their account? You may yet be
spared with them for many years.
Nay you may outlive them. And
if called to follow one and another
to their graves it will perhaps add
to the torrent of your tears there
to recollect the many needless un-
believing fears you are now indulg-
ing. But if it be as you appre-
hend, and even father and mother
forsake them has not their heaven-
ly father and yours engaged to
take them up? And is he not able
to be better to them, and to do
better

140 *Ministers in Affliction.*

better for them than the wisest, tenderest and best of Parents? You have committed them into his hand, leave them there. You have devoted them to him, and will he not take care of his own? Renew the commitment and consecration of yourself and yours to the Lord. — Ask his blessing upon them. Give them the best counsel, caution and encouragements you can both for time and eternity, and then lay yourself and yours at the foot of God and say, Here am I, and here are those which thou hast graciously given me, do with me and mine as seemeth good in thy sight.

It only remains that I endeavour
2. *To express a fraternal sympathy with such of my Brethren in the Ministry as are under the afflicting hand of G O D; or, rather to realize the spirit, language and behaviour that becomes me in such circumstances.*

When

When laid aside from my publick work I have time, and am undoubtedly called, to consider seriously not only the principles upon which it was undertaken, but the manner in which it has been pursued, and the ends answered by it both upon myself and the souls that have been committed to my care. In a little while and my Lord will say unto me Give an account of thy stewardship for thou mayest be no longer steward. A great trust has been committed to me. I have been a steward of the mysteries of God. Can I say now with the Apostle Paul
"I have not been as many which
" corrupt the word of God, but as
" of sincerity, as of God, and as in
" his sight, so have I spoken in
" Christ: renouncing the hidden
" things of dishonesty, not walk-
" in craftiness, nor handling the
" word of God deceitfully, but
" by manifestation of the truth,
" commending

"commending myself to every
 man's conscience in the sight of
 "God." * Can I now appeal to
 the precious souls around me
 that have been committed to my
 charge in the language of that
 Apostle at his departure from Mi-
 letus † "I take you to record this
 "day that I am pure from the
 "blood of all men, for I have not
 "shunned to declare unto you all
 "the counsel of God, I have kept
 "back nothing that was, or that was
 "like to be profitable unto you.
 "Woe to me if I have not preach-
 "ed the gospel." Woe to me if I
 have betrayed, if I have neglect-
 ed souls. Have I been thorough-
 ly sensible of the worth of my
 own? Have I discovered a proper
 sense of its value in committing it
 into the hands of that mighty Re-
 deemer who is able to keep what I
 commit to him against that day.

2 Cor. ii. 17. iv. 1. † Acts xx. 26, 27.

Have

Have I been watching with due care and caution against all temptations, lusts and passions, as becometh one anxious with that Apostle, lest after having preached to others I myself should be a cast-away? Nay has it been my prayer and endeavour, as undoubtedly it ought to be, that I might excel in every christian grace as well as in every ministerial gift? or, in other words, that my soul might prosper and be in health. He must certainly have been very unfit to take the oversight of other souls that does not look well to his own. But many others have been committed to my trust: Some of which are gone before me, and the rest I must expect will follow me soon to the Tribunal of Christ my Lord and theirs. Oh how shall I meet them there? Are there not some few over whom I may now think and say "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the
" presence

“presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Ye are
“our glory and joy?” But have I not reason to fear of many more that they have perished or are like to perish from under my ministrations? And will their blood be required at the watchman’s hands? God forbid! The good Lord pardon the imperfections of his servant! Many such have attended me and all my services. But has it not been my desire, my endeavour to be faithful? Have I not longed for souls in the bowels of Jesus Christ? Has not his honour, his cause, his service been dear to me? Has it not been my desire and delight to preach, not myself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that I might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus? Reason indeed have I, after all I have done, and had it been ten thousand times more,

more to acknowledge myself an unprofitable servant; to say that I have done but what was my duty to do: nay that I have in innumerable instances come short of that. To that Saviour whom I have recommended to others would I now therefore apply for myself, Lord Jesus! receive my spirit;

“ A guilty, weak, and helpless worm

“ On thy kind arms I fall,

“ Be thou my strength and righteousness,

“ My Jesus, and my All.”

But we must proceed to our last address which is to be directed

§. 4. To persons whose afflictions have arisen more immediately from very different causes—We speak here of second causes.

Though, as was before observed, the divine permission is to be acknowledged in all, yet the intervention of these is more apparent in some events than in others. Let us each consider from whence ours come, that we may be direct-

N

ed

ed to a suitable temper and behaviour under them.

1. *The sufferings which some endure are the evident consequences of their own sins, or follies.* Not now to enlarge on those difficulties, wants and sorrows which many incur by extravagance or idleness; or the disgrace and misery into which others involve themselves and all that are either dependant upon them or any way connected with them by their injustice, fraud or violence; the case to which we now more immediately refer is that of persons who bring bodily diseases upon themselves by their criminal indulgence either of their passions, appetites or lusts — Uncleanneſs, Gluttony or Drunkenneſs have proved to many the ſad occaſions of painful or pining diſorders that have broke down the ſtrongeſt conſtitutions and hurried them to an untimely grave. The Gout, Rheumatism, Dropſy,
Violent

Violent Inflammations, painful and
nauseous Ulcers, Hectic Fevers,
Coughs, Consumptions and many
other grievous maladies have been
incurred in innumerable instan-
ces by such intemperate excesses.
And what shall we, what can we
say to such as suffer from them?
Receiving herein the due reward or
natural effect of their evil deeds,
whatever they feel, of all o-
thers, they have the least reason to
complain. And whatever their best
friends may feel for them little can
be offered to administer the sup-
port and consolation which huma-
nity and christian sympathy would
wish them in any other circumstan-
ces: nothing, till they discover a
penitent sense of the evil of their
ways, but what may tend to humble
and alarm them. Indeed, suffering
sinner, contrition and self-abase-
ment become you while made thus
to possess your iniquities, whether
committed in youth or in riper
N 2 years.

years. Every ach and pain you feel is a memento to you of your past conduct and a call to repentance. The restless hours you spend upon your bed forewarn you of the more dreadful and incessant tortures that await the ungodly and impure in that state where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Self-accusation will make no small part of the misery of that world of woe; and it must add to the anguish of every upbraiding of your conscience, if removed thither, that you have not only procured but hastened your own ruin; as though too impatient of its delay to wait the slow course of nature, you was determined to be your own executioner. For this every one is, in the case here supposed, as really though not so instantaneously as the man that puts a pistol to his head, or runs a dagger to his heart. But you are still spared. May it be in mercy!

mercy! in mercy to your soul! It is my sincere wish for you that both the chastisement, and the patience of God may be so. Do you wish it for yourself? Let me ask you, and entreat you to consider well, how your past and present condition appear to you. You are concerned to think that you should have been foolish enough to bring upon yourself such sufferings as you now endure. And perhaps the prospect of death and hell may alarm you. But there are other considerations that ought to grieve and humble every one in such circumstances as yours. Know you not that you have been sinning against God, and against your own soul and body too? That you have been abusing the appetites and passions implanted by the Author of your frame for your support, your enjoyment and usefulness, and perverted them into the sad occasions of your misery and ruin? That

you have turned the benefits of an indulgent Providence bestowed upon you for your sustenance into poison? and have been cutting short the days which a gracious God allotted you for your own happiness both in this life and another and to make you a blessing to your fellow-creatures; or have done all you could to make the remainder of them miserable to yourself, and useless to all that are round about you? Indeed you have much to be humbled for now, and will have much to account for another day if the mercy of God is not extended to you before to secure your pardon, if you are not by his grace created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Oh seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near; if the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him, and unto our

the Consequences of their Sins. 151

our God he will abundantly pardon. If you are interested in that pardoning mercy it will be well with you living or dying. But you must seek if you would find, you must ask as you hope to receive, and knock as you desire the door may be opened unto you; and that in the name of Jesus: for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved but that of Jesus Christ. It is your mercy to be assured he is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by him as he ever lives to make intercession. But know and consider it well, that your circumstances are alarming, and perhaps nearly critical. Now is the accepted time, Now is the day of salvation. A few days, a few hours more may carry you beyond hope, beyond the reach of prayer; or render you incapable of it. Embrace and improve the present moment. Cry in good earnest

“ Great

"Great God create my heart anew;
 And form my spirit pure and true;
 Oh make me wise in time to see
 My danger and my remedy.
 Behold I fall before thy face;
 My only refuge is thy Grace;
 Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
 Hath power sufficient to atone.
 While guilt disturbs and breaks my
 peace
 Nor flesh nor soul hath rest nor ease;
 Lord, let me hear thy pard'ning voice
 And make my broken heart rejoice."

But should you be spared—
 should you be restored—how do
 you think, how should you wish,
 how would you resolve to spend
 the remainder of your days upon
 earth? Consider it well now. Seek
 divine direction to guide your re-
 solutions, form them in depend-
 ance on a better strength than your
 own, and fervently implore divine
 grace to enable you to fulfil them.

But we shall conclude with a
 few words

2. *To those who suffer for righteousness Sake.* Those, we mean, who on account of a faithful adherence to what they esteem the truth as it is in Jesus, to those ordinances which they apprehend he has instituted as means of grace, and to those rules of duty which they reverence as enjoined by him upon all his followers, are not only despised and hated, laughed at and reviled, but likewise injured and oppressed in their property, or their peace and comfort to a degree that is hurtful to their health as well as inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free. Let such hear the word of their exalted Lord, and may they ever feel its animating influence whether in publick or in private stations, "Be faithful unto death."* He has indeed said much in his word both to quicken

* Rev. ii. 10.

and

and encourage you. Be not discouraged or amazed as though some strange thing, or some new thing had happened unto you. Many, and among them some of the most eminent servants of God, have been exposed to the like trial. Nay your divine Master himself has suffered much in this way, and has warned you as his followers to expect persecution. His apostle Paul says if any will live godly in Christ he must endure it. Only look well to these two things, *that your cause be good, and, that you engage and suffer in it upon the best principles,* and if you suffer for righteousness sake happy are ye; be not afraid of their terror, be not ashamed of your cause nor of any thing that you suffer wrongfully in it. * “Blessed are ye” said Jesus to his disciples, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and perse-

* See 1 Pet. iii. 13—18. James i. 2—4.

“cure you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven.” *

In the midst of all let the same mind be in you which was also in your suffering Master, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth. †

When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. ‡

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you.

But hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; Be in nothing terrified by your adversaries to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; who so suffereth according to the will of

* Matt. v. 10—12, † Is. liii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 12—23

“ GOD

God let him commit the keeping of his soul unto him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator. And if called to seal the truth with your blood be not dismayed: Having suffered with and for Jesus you shall also be glorified together. May each of his followers in that hour of trial be enabled to maintain the spirit and adopt the language of his servant Paul, "None of these things
 " move me, neither count I my
 " life dear unto me. I am ready
 " to be offered, the time of my
 " departure is at hand; I have
 " fought a good fight, I have finish-
 " ed my course, I have kept the
 " faith; henceforth there is laid
 " up for me a crown of righteous-
 " ness, which the Lord the righte-
 " ous Judge shall give me at that
 " day; and not to me only but to
 " all them that love his appear-
 " ing." *

* 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8.

PART II.

PART II.

On Recovery from AFFLICTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

*Instructions to all the People of GOD
who have been spared in Afflictions,
and recovered from them.*

§. 1.  HE first thing I would recommend to you in present circumstances is a *serious recollection* of the past. Forget not what you have suffered. You probably thought, in the midst of your sufferings that you never should, that you never could forget them. And did you not wish and pray that you never might? But in your return to the amusements, company, or business
O of

of life you will be in danger of losing the impression if you do not retire frequently to realize the scenes you have passed through, and what you felt in the midst of them. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." If all remembrance of our pains and sicknesses be lost, and the danger into which we were brought by them, it is more than probable the instructions they were intended to convey will be lost too. Many good men have observed the anniversary of days of signal dangers and deliverance in devout fasting and prayer all their lives. Then have they called to mind what they felt and what they feared. "I said my breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. I said in the cutting off of my days I am deprived of the residue of my years—I shall behold man no more in the land of the living."

And

And what were my apprehensions, what my hopes then? How did my past conduct appear to me? What did I then wish undone that I had committed, or done that I had carelessly neglected? What pained me, what comforted me in those circumstances? How did the world and all that is therein appear to my soul? What were my views of Death, Eternity and Judgment, Heaven and Hell? What were my most ardent desires, what my most delightful prospects? What occasioned me the greatest remorse and alarm? What afforded me the most solid support and the richest consolation? What resolutions did I form on my sick bed and in the near views of another world? How did I intend and determine to spend the residue of my days in this if God should in mercy spare me?

To recollection add

§. 2. *Self-Examination.* Am I what I ought to be, and what may be

be expected of one thus chastised and saved? I hoped, and therefore I said unto the Lord in my affliction when thou hast tried me I shall come forth as gold: and have I been properly, been thoroughly purified by the visitation? Have the sinful practices been forborne, the inward corruptions suppressed and mortified, the errors corrected, the defects supplied which distressed me in my hours of pain and danger? Have I rendered, am I daily rendering unto God according to his great and manifold benefits, and attending to those duties to my fellow-creatures, the neglect of which was then painful in the review? Have I since been more careful than ever to make the best improvement of every day, of every hour of health and privilege; and more especially of sacred seasons, and the privileges to which I am now restored in the house of my God? In a word

word, am I now more fit both for life and death—for this world and another? Can I from thence say with holy David it has been good for me to be afflicted? may I hope, that this visitation will be crowned with the fruits of righteousness and life to my soul for ever? “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”* Moreover,

3. *Lament that the trial was so much needed, and has been no better improved.* We not only know in general, that if afflictions were not needed they would not be sent, but may likewise, perhaps, have remarked, that in our trials which pointed out the more immediate design and occasion of them. Or, in other words, we might read our sin in our punishment; both in the nature of the chastisement, the time in which it came, and the circum-

* Lamentations iii. 40.

stances with which it was attended. For this it becomes us to humble ourselves, not only when actually under the mighty hand of God, but also when it is removed from us. And so much the more if the end of it was not properly attended to then, and has not since been effectually answered. If there are still with us even with us sins against the Lord our God. Sins as great and as many since the trial as before. Nay those very sins that it was intended to bring to our remembrance, and engage us to put away. With bitterness of soul, and in tears of grief may we mourn over such sad symptoms of an unfeeling heart as give us reason to expect repeated and severer corrections. "I have smitten you, said God to his ancient people * with blasting, &c. I have given you cleanness of

* Amos iv. 6—13.

"teeth,

teeth, and want of bread in all
 your borders; I have sent the
 pestilence among you; I have
 overthrown some of you as the
 Lord overthrew Sodom and Go-
 morrah, and ye were as a fire-
 brand pluckt out of the burn-
 ing; and yet, and yet (the com-
 plaint is repeated again and a-
 gain) and yet have ye not re-
 turned unto me saith the Lord.”
 Even the Prodigal, when he suffer-
 ed, resolved to return. And have
 we remained still as far from our
 Father as before? Well may we
 lament our ingratitude and our
 folly. At best we have too much
 reason to acknowledge that it is
 not with us as it ought to be, we
 have not that lowly sense of our
 own weakness and guilt, that live-
 ly faith in God and a Redeemer,
 that sacred detestation of sin, that
 desire after and delight in univer-
 sal holiness, that filial love to our
 Father who is in Heaven, to our
 blessed

164 *Thanksgiving on Recovery.*

blesſed Saviour and the whole houſhold of faith, nor that fervent zeal in the cauſe of Chriſt and the ſervice of mankind, which might be expected after ſuch a teaching, purifying, quickening Providence. We have therefore much to lament — yet we muſt acknowledge like- wiſe that it well becomes us.

4. *To abound in Thankſgiving.*
“Call upon me in the day of trou-
“ble, I will deliver thee, and thou
“ſhalt glorify me.” This is the
will of God concerning us. And
the language of a grateful mind is
“What ſhall I render unto God
“for all his benefits towards me?”
What indeed! what can we ren-
der? nothing that deſerves the
name of a return for the leaſt of
them. Yet while we live let us
praiſe the Lord, be thankful unto
him and ſpeak well of his name.
We ſhould do this both in private
and in publick, alone, and in the

* Pf. cxvi. 12.

affuredly

Thanksgiving on Recovery 165

assembly of the saints—nor satisfy ourselves with the forms and expressions of thanksgiving, but cherish in our hearts a devout and grateful sense of that his goodness to which we are indebted for all we are and all we have. “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness, and tender mercies.” * Such acknowledgments are everdue, and should be made daily to our divine Preserver and Benefactor. But more especially

“ When we are rais’d from deep distress
“ Our good deserves a song
“ We’ll take the pattern of our praise
“ From Hezekiah’s tongue,

• Ps. ciii. 1—4.

“ The

166 *Thanksgiving on Recovery.*

The gates of the devouring grave

“ Are opened wide in vain :

“ If He that holds the keys of death

“ Commands them fast again. &c. &c.

See Dr. Watts's Hymns, B. I. H. 55. On Isaiah
xxxviii. verse 9, 10.

After the example of that pious
prince let us celebrate the mercy
that afforded us the means of reco-
very, & crowned them with a blef-
sing; in consequence of which our
forfeited lives have been spared,
the faculties of soul and body re-
newed, and our many privileges re-
stored both in the house of God
and our own. The mercy to which
we owe it that our bodies are not
shut up in the darksome grave,
and that our souls are not consign-
ed over to everlasting darkness and
despair: We may each sing with
pious pleasure

“ The Lord beheld me sore distressed

“ He bid my pains remove :

“ Return my soul to God thy rest

“ And sound aloud his love.

“ My

Thanksgiving on Recovery. 167

" My God has sav'd my soul from
death,

" And dry'd my falling tears;

" Now in his Praise I'll spend my
breath

" And my remaining years.

WATTS, Pl. CXVI.

Every friend and comfort with
which we see ourselves surround-
ed, and every feeling and faculty
that enables us again to enjoy the
pleasure and benefit of all, should
call up the most grateful affections
of our souls, and call forth the de-
vout acknowledgments and praises
of our tongues. And have we farther
to recollect support and consolati-
on seasonably and successfully ad-
ministered in the day of our pain
and sickness? an almighty aid
whereby we were not only enabled
to bear affliction with patience,
but even to rejoice in tribulation,
and to glory in our infirmities;
Jesus our Lord imparting grace
sufficient for us, and reviving and
delighting

166 *Thanksgiving on Recovery.*

The gates of the devouring grave

“ Are opened wide in vain :

“ If He that holds the keys of death

“ Commands them fast again. &c. &c.

See Dr. Watts's Hymns. B. I. H. 55. On Isaiah
xxxviii. verse 9, 10.

After the example of that pious prince let us celebrate the mercy that afforded us the means of recovery, & crowned them with a blessing ; in consequence of which our forfeited lives have been spared, the faculties of soul and body renewed, and our many privileges restored both in the house of God and our own. The mercy to which we owe it that our bodies are not shut up in the darksome grave, and that our souls are not consigned over to everlasting darkness and despair : We may each sing with pious pleasure

“ The Lord beheld me sore distressed

“ He bid my pains remove :

“ Return my soul to God thy rest

“ And sound aloud his love.

“ My

Thanksgiving on Recovery. 167

" My God has sav'd my soul from
death,

" And dry'd my falling tears;

" Now in his Praise I'll spend my
breath

" And my remaining years.

WATTS, PS. CXVI.

Every friend and comfort with which we see ourselves surrounded, and every feeling and faculty that enables us again to enjoy the pleasure and benefit of all, should call up the most grateful affections of our souls, and call forth the devout acknowledgments and praises of our tongues. And have we farther to recollect support and consolation seasonably and successfully administered in the day of our pain and sickness? an almighty aid whereby we were not only enabled to bear affliction with patience, but even to rejoice in tribulation, and to glory in our infirmities; Jesus our Lord imparting grace sufficient for us, and reviving and delighting

168 *Thanksgiving on Recovery.*

delighting our souls with the consolations of his grace, and a lively hope of his eternal glory? Were we thus not only upheld in the day of adversity and carried through it, but carried so far above it as that we can pronounce our most painful moments some of the happiest we ever spent, or ever expected to enjoy in the body? Then may we, then must we indeed praise the Lord and magnify his name. And while expressing our joys, let us not forget to sing the fountain from which they all flow. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ and the rich discoveries of grace to perishing sinners through Him contained in the everlasting gospel. How precious on a sick-bed and in the near views of death and judgment! Thanks to that indulgent Providence which put the sacred volume into my hands, that gave me to hear the joyful sound; eternal thanks to that grace which opened
my

Thanksgiving on Recovery. 159

my ears and my heart to receive the glad tidings! They were always dear to me since I knew them, but never did I feel the worth of gospel-grace, the value of a Saviour, of such an Advocate with the Father as Jesus Christ the righteous so sensibly as when I seemed to myself and all around me just going to appear before God. "My faith, (said a serious minister* when he apprehended himself in such circumstances) now fixes on a bleeding dying Christ.

" He seiz'd our dreadful right; the load
" sustain'd,

" And heav'd the mountain from a
" guilty world."

" O, precious Christ! precious
" blood! precious salvation! when
" it is out of the power of any
" worldly considerations to afford

* The Rev. Mr. John Fawcett who has published Views of Death and Eternity as realized by himself.

P

" relief,

170 *Thanksgiving on Recovery.*

“ relief, how salutary these to sus-
“ tain my fainting heart. The
“ glory of this soul quickening
“ truth sheds its sacred influence
“ on my drooping mind. “ He
“ gave himself for us.” Here is
“ the door of hope in the valley
“ of Achor. O blessed ground of
“ comfort and peace ! Here is firm
“ footing, here is solid rock. Now
“ I am upon the verge of eternity,
“ and perhaps just going to launch
“ into the invisible world I can
“ find consolation in nothing short
“ of this precious truth—complete,
“ everlasting satisfaction made for
“ sin by the death of Christ ; What
“ a solace in life, what a comfort
“ in death to a poor self-condemn-
“ ed criminal is this leading and
“ capital truth of the everlasting
“ gospel ! ” And have we found
it so to us ? Enlivening our hopes
and brightening our prospects when
we had received the sentence of
death within ourselves ? In so much
that

Thanksgiving on Recovery. 171

that when we thought we were almost within hearing of the songs of heaven our souls longed, yea attempted, to join the celestial choirs. "Unto him that loved us
"and washed us from our sins in
"his own blood, and hath made
"us kings and priests unto God
"and his Father, to him be glory
"and dominion for ever and ever,
"Amen," Assist me, O my God, to praise thee for these divine consolations, for the peaceable fruits of righteousness which thy chastisements have already yielded; and for the hope I am encouraged to entertain of their working out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I will bless thee while I live, I will sing praises to my God while I have any being.

"While I have motion life and breath

"I will proclaim Thee blest;

"Yet when my voice expires in death

"My soul shall praise Thee best.

Non let us forget hereupon

§. 5. *To be much in Prayer.* Such was David's resolution on his recovery from a very painful and dangerous affliction "The shadows of death compassed me—then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous, yea our God is merciful: And now do I determine that because he hath inclined his ear unto me therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Psalm cxvi. And what more becoming, or more reasonable? We sought the Lord in trouble and he heard us. Shall we not take encouragement from thence to look unto him and to hope in him for the time to come? Has not God by such an answer to prayer done enough to recommend the practice as long as we have breath to pray. Let us not be tempted to think that we have

now

now no farther occasion for it. So much the more for this deliverance; to beg grace to improve it, and to fit us for every new duty to which he is now calling us. We said in our extremity the good Lord spare us and we will serve him. This is part of the service he requires of us: And can we basely neglect to acknowledge and honour him in it? Shall we cast off his fear, and be weary of his worship after he has done such great and good things for us? We probably engaged in his name and strength, to betake ourselves to other duties if he would vouchsafe to restore us, and shall we now imagine ourselves sufficient for them without his assistance, or can we expect it if we do not ask it? Never shall we be able to live without prayer, while we continue in a frail body and a changing sinful world. It is the breath of dependance as well as of distress,

174 *Watchfulness recommended*

and of a pious and grateful as well
as of a burdened heart. Pray
without ceasing. You most cer-
tainly will if you are at all the
better for what God has done.
The exercises of communion with
him both in publick and private
will be desireable and delightful
and you will thankfully embrace
every opportunity of pouring out
your heart freely and fully before
the Lord. "Oh that I knew where
" I might find him I would come
" even to his seat, I would spread
" my cause before him, and fill
" my mouth with arguments."
Moreover

§. 6. *To Prayer add Watchfulness.*
Jesus often recommended both as
mutually helpful to each other,
and necessary to the safety and
comfort of all his disciples. We
have always an important charge
to watch over, and many dangerous
evils to watch against: But it con-
cerns us to be peculiarly attentive
to

to each when we have been raised up from a bed of sickness, and are about to return into the world; especially as the enemies of our peace and safety will then attack us with advantage when our strength is small. Hence the fears which many a good man has expressed on the first symptoms of a recovery. And must I be sent back again into an ocean of rocks and storms, when I had got within sight of my desired haven, and was almost in hourly expectation of setting foot on the heavenly shores? If it must be, let me return with great caution: and make it manifest, in the constant circumspection with which for the future I steer my course, that I have profited by past difficulties and dangers. It would be peculiarly distressing and disgraceful for an old sailor, through ignorance or inattention, to be shipwrecked at last, especially in seas with which he has been long conversant.

176 *Watchfulness recommended*

versant, Look well about thee,
O my soul, on every hand. A
calm is not without its dangers.
Think where thou art, and with
what thou art surrounded. Never
may it be my weakness to despise
dangers, never my unhappiness to
be surprised in an unguarded mo-
ment! How then will my enemies
triumph!—delivered by the hand
of God, from the jaws of the de-
vouring grave, and fallen by—
Ah by whom and by what? By
that adversary who goes about
like a roaring lion seeking whom
he may devour? By the artifices
of an ensnaring, tempting world?
God forbid! O my soul, be sober,
be vigilant. Nor imagine that thy
worst enemies, or thy most threat-
ening dangers are without. Oh
the sad mischief that lurks within!
Is there not much to alarm thee
there still? Yes to this moment—
notwithstanding all that has been
done to deliver thee from it? Let

it

it not however lie there unobserv-
ed. Be now more than ever on
thy guard against it. Who can
tell how much it has contribut-
ed to what thou hast suffered.
That pride, that carnality, that
unbelief, that stubborn self-will,
that groveling love of the world!
Watch against it with a careful,
a fearful and a jealous eye. Look
well to its first risings. Such is
the advice of heavenly wisdom
"Keep thy heart with all dili-
gence," with all keeping. And
that not merely to guard against
what ever would be directly offen-
sive to God, but every thing that
would lead thy thoughts from him,
or abate the ardour of thy pious
affections. Many such things the
people of God in almost every si-
tuation will find occurring on their
return to active life after a state of
confinement. Have you not made
the remark on others, may you not
make

178 *Dying daily recommended*

make it for yourself? Whatever therefore was the sin which most easily beset you before, be most constantly and attentively on your guard against that now: and if you have remarked evils from which others have suffered in circumstances similar to your own, avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them and pass away. It has long been recommended as a maxim of prudence, and as such most certainly deserves our attention when and wherever our best interests would be affected, to "make other's ship-wrecks our sea-marks." Perfectly consistent with this may the Christian on his recovery

§. 7. *Die daily.* The Apostle Paul perhaps used that expression with reference to the trials and dangers which daily attended him: agreeable to what he says of himself elsewhere in deaths often: but this his language is certainly capable of a more extensive meaning. Though

it

it is far from desirable to be ever foreboding our dissolution in a manner that would render us unfit for the duties of life, and incapable of relishing its enjoyments; yet, when called back from the gates of the grave, we ought by no means to forget that we are to return thither. Some seem to have mistaken a slight temporary repair of the fleshly tabernacle for the grant of a long lease to the inhabitant. But let us remember we are now, as ever, tenants at will: and are still as liable as ever we were to be turned out at an hour's, nay at a moment's warning. A good man who had lived long under the powerful impression of this thought when some appointment was proposed to him for the morrow said to his friend "I have not had a morrow for many years." I die daily. And this it becomes us to do, not only by maintaining thus an habitual regard to a dying hour,

hour, and a serious sense of the uncertainty of life; but likewise by a holy superiority to all those pleasures and cares in it, that would unfit us for our departure out of it. When on a sick bed and in the near views of eternity we could each of us perhaps say with Dr. Watts

“ Then was I dead to all the Globe ”

“ And all the Globe was dead to me ”

And could we not then add in the still more emphatic language of a Paul “ nevertheless I live ? never more truly, never more happily than when thus dead. “ Since I “ was last in this place ” (says Mr. Nathaniel Vincent at a beginning of a discourse he preached and published soon after a dangerous affliction) “ I have been brought “ very near to another world, and “ when I had a clearer view of it “ I found that God was All; and “ that all this world was nothing, less

“less, than nothing and vanity.”

Say not these thoughts may be very seasonable in an hour of affliction, but——(but what? but)

there's a time for every thing. Time

for every thing that becomes us as

men and as christians: But no

time, consistent with either cha-

acter, to live as though we should

never die. Nor would our ex-

istence deserve the name of living

if we should. Then do we live

when we are most sensibly dead to

sin and alive to God through Je-

sus Christ our Lord. “I am cru-

“cified with Christ nevertheless I

“live: and the life that I live in

“the flesh I live by the faith of

“the Son of God who loved me

“and gave himself for me.”

Oh my soul, enter into the spirit

of one who entered thoroughly

into the spirit of his Master and

thine. Thou hast seen an end of

all perfection; and felt the vanity

of all that the world calls good

Q

and

182 *Dying daily recommended*

and great. Silver and gold, houses and lands, pleasurable entertainments, a showy appearance, high-sounding titles, the applause of men, and every possible gratification of sensual appetites, lusts and passions. — How dead didst thou feel to them all awhile ago? And that not merely as rendered incapable of them, but as being formed and admitted to a taste of higher enjoyments. When in thy views near heaven, and thy God was near to thee, thou couldst look down with indifference, nay with contempt on all created good and say

“ I send these joys of Earth away,
 “ Away ye Tempters of the mind,
 “ False as the smooth deceitful sea
 “ And empty as the whistling wind.
 “ Now to the shining Realms above
 “ I stretch my hands, and glance my eyes;
 “ O for the Pinions of a Dove
 “ To bear me to those upper skies.”

Dr. WATTS

This

This is the Christian in character. These are principles and views that become him in every situation and circumstance, and never more than on his return to life from the brink of the grave. May we preserve this spirit then, and carry it resolutely with us through every scene of it as becomes those who have been so lately and solemnly reminded that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. As justly may we say of our own afflictions as Dr. Young does of the deaths of our friends—They

—“Are Angels sent on errands full of love.”

And sent among other ends, for this

“To damp our brainless ardours, and abate

“That glare of life which often blinds the wise.”

Nor should the influence of them end here: They are designed to teach us moderation in our attachments to those earthly pleasures:

284 *Trust in GOD recommended*

things that appear not only innocent but desirable, and to all those interests and connections which are confined to the present state. "This I say, Brethren, that the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. Again the mercy we have experienced may teach us

§. 8. *To trust in GOD.* To trust evermore. Through life, even in the most trying and alarming seasons and circumstances. When under the more immediate impression of a seasonable and gracious deliverance, in which the hand and love of God were apparent

rent, we thought probably we always should: that we could not do otherwise. It will be well if we never forget ourselves, if we are never tempted to cast away our confidence—May we learn from hence to trust God both with our own lives and those of our dearest friends! When surrounding their sick-beds, or laid again upon their own. The Lord will do right. He is a God of truth, a God of faithfulness, a God of grace. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. I was brought low and he helped me, The sorrows of death compassed me, and the horrors of the opening grave seized me, I found trouble and sorrow: I said I am deprived of the residue of my years. But my God redeemed my life from destruction. He has been better to me than my fears and better than my hopes. And shall I, can I ever distrust him any more? Shall I

186 *Trust in GOD recommended*

ever be afraid to leave myself in his hands? I have now seen what he can do; and shall I not hope in him as long as I live? hope in him to prolong my days, to support my fainting spirit, and to preserve my health, or to restore it whenever it is interrupted? I have seen that nothing is too hard for the Lord, and have reason to believe he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. I will therefore face every danger and enemy he calls me out unto in the spirit of his servant David.

“The Lord that delivered me out
 “of the paw of the lion and out
 “of the paw of the bear, He will
 “deliver me out of the hand of
 “this Philistine.”* The apostle Paul and his brethren expressed the like confidence in God, and that upon the same principle †

“We had the sentence of death

* 1 Sam. 36, 37. † 2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

“ in

"in ourselves that we should not
 "trust in ourselves, but in God
 "that raiseth the dead, who de-
 "livered us from so great a death,
 "and doth deliver; in whom we
 "trust that he will yet deliver us.
 Save us from future trials, or save
 us in them as seemeth good in his
 sight. He has promised that all
 shall end well, and work together
 for good to them that love him.
 And having now fulfilled his word
 unto his servant upon which he
 caused me to hope shall I distrust
 him for the time to come? God
 forbid! Rather would I say unto
 him with the sacred psalmist "Be-
 "cause thou hast been my help;
 "therefore in the shadow of thy
 "wings will I rejoice. * "Why art
 "thou cast down, O my soul, why
 "shouldst thou ever be disquieted
 "within me? hope thou in God,
 "for I shall yet praise him who is
 "is the health of my countenance

* Ps. lxiii. 7.

and

and my God. *†* Cheerfully now
 would I trust my Merciful Fa-
 ther with my body to do with that
 as he pleaseth: and from the expe-
 rience I have had of his goodness
 to that I would take encourage-
 ment to commit my soul into his
 hands through Christ Jesus; and
 that not only or chiefly for the life
 that now is, but for that which is
 to come. Though I walk through
 “the valley of the shadow of
 “death I will fear no evil, for
 “thou art with me, thy rod and
 “thy staff they shall comfort me—
 “Surely goodness and mercy shall
 “follow me all the days of my
 “life, and I shall dwell in the
 “house of the Lord for ever.”

Let me add another exhortation
 to such of my readers as have been
 carried through afflictions

§. 9. *Sympathize more tenderly than
 ever with the afflicted and be more*

• Ps. xxiii. 4—6.

† Ps. xlii. 11.

heartly

Sympathize with the afflicted. 189

heartily and active in your best endeavours to comfort and relieve them.

To the afflicted pity should be shown by all. By all men, and especially by all christians; whatever may have been their own situations and circumstances. But we should be inexcuseable indeed, if insensible to the sufferings of our brethren after having suffered ourselves. We have known how much the afflicted need pity, and can remember how naturally and reasonably it is expected then of all around them—we have felt the relief and comfort of it from our affectionate friends—or perhaps have been hurt by appearances of insensibility to our sufferings that we thought we discovered in some that were about us. And does not every such consideration bespeak our tenderest sympathy? We have likewise tasted the sweets of health and ease after sickness and pain, and shall we not wish and pray
and

and labour for our fellow-creatures that they may experience them. We ought not to forget that after having gone through afflictions ourselves we are more fit and therefore should be more ready to comfort and assist others. Possibly it may have been an important end of our trials both to enable and dispose us to perform these offices of compassion. It is said of our dear Lord that having himself suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted. * His heart was indeed ever susceptible of the tenderest impressions. He was all love. Eternal and unchangeable love. And yet, as in one passage he is said to have learned obedience, so here sympathy, by the things which he suffered. We say Experience is the best Teacher. May we learn from it this lesson of our holy religion to weep with

Hes. ii, 10.

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Sympathize with the afflicted. 191

those that weep, and to bear one another's burdens: so shall we at once fulfil the law of Christ, and imitate his amiable example, who went about doing good.

§. 10. *Make the best Improvement of restored Powers and Privileges.* If a good God has not only eased our pains, and healed our sicknesses, but likewise repaired a poor decayed tottering tabernacle so that our youth is renewed like the eagles, surely it should be our business and delight to glorify God with our bodies and with our spirits which are the Lord's. His they always were; but he has now renewed his claim to them, and our obligations to think and speak and act for him. When our bodily senses were impaired by sickness, and every organ and limb seemed almost useless to ourselves and all around us, it probably grieved us to recollect the hours and days we lost in inactivity and indolence, when

when we should and might have been up and doing. And did we not think and say then, that, if ever restored, our faculties and talents should be no more trilled away? We were convinced that they ought not to be. And do we not think so now? We can now relish enjoyments, natural and spiritual, from which we were laid aside; and undertake services of which we were utterly incapable. And shall we not value every mercy, and exert every power more and better than ever we did before? "A Blessing nearly lost" (said one) acquires new charms." Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, The seasons and means of grace to which we are restored should most certainly be dearer to us, and it becomes us to employ every faculty both of body and soul in the most serious attention to them, and diligent improvement of them. **Blessed**

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Restored Powers and Privileges. 193

sed be GOD I can look into his word again; my Bible shall not lye by me any longer unopened. I find myself once more able to converse with his People; most gladly therefore will I again call them around me, tell them what GOD has done for my soul, and entreat them to counsel and assist me in the returns of love and praise to the Father of my mercies. The first efforts of that strength he has so graciously restored shall be exerted in going up with the multitude that keep holy day, that I may pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his People. I have known what it is to spend solitary sabbaths on a sick bed, or in a chamber of confinement, when I could neither hear nor pray with others: no, nor without great difficulty, pray for myself. I cried out "O when shall I go, and appear before GOD? My soul thirsteth for thee, again to see
R " thy

thy power and thy glory as I
 have seen thee in the sanctuary.
 Glad am I now to hear one pious
 friend and another saying to me
 again, "Let us go into the house
 of the Lord; my feet shall stand
 within thy gates, O Jerusalem."
 And Oh, that on my return to my
 family and the world, "*Holiness to the*
Lord," may be engraven on all
 I am, on all I have, and on all I do.
 Once more;—having been pre-

§. 11. *I beseech you, Brethren, by
 the mercies of GOD, that you pre-
 sent your whole selves, soul and body,
 a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable un-
 to GOD; your reasonable service.*
 May his people never want a heart
 for the exercises and engagements
 of such a dedication of themselves
 unto Him whose they are, and
 whom they are continually bound
 to serve! But when brought back
 from the gates of the grave, and a
 gracious GOD has renewed their
 strength,

strength, it becomes them to consecrate every capacity and talent to him with peculiar solemnity. We should do it in private as soon as we are capable of reviewing what our heavenly Father has done for us; realizing his hand and love in our preservation, the many comforts and privileges to which we are restored, and the returns that may reasonably be expected from us. Then should we, with all possible seriousness and with full purpose of heart, yield ourselves to the Lord, and lay our all at his feet, to be employed and disposed of by him and for him according to his sovereign pleasure; saying each of us in his presence,

“ My life and soul, my heart and flesh,

“ And all my powers are thine.”

By the assistance of divine grace,
I will make it the business and delight of all the remaining days of my life, to glorify the God in
R 2 whose

whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways. Before we return to the cares and hurries of life, we may enter into religious transactions and engagements of this sort with peculiar advantage; and, if properly attended to, they will prove, under God, a happy preservative against the undue influence of future difficulties and temptations; especially when followed with a publick dedication of ourselves to the Lord in his house and at his table. I cannot mention the covenant engagements of the Lord's Table, without expressing my concern for the loss which those christians are incurring to their own souls, the discouragement they are occasioning to their ministers, the affront they are offering to their great Lord, and the injury they are doing to his interest, who spend months and years of health and privilege in the neglect of them. Their

Their condition is truly deplorable, who, while they call themselves christians, remain strangers to those holy and devout affections and principles which are essential to the christian character, and therefore necessary qualifications for this christian ordinance. If unfit to take part with the church of Christ upon earth, how incapable must they be of joining in the exalted services of just men made perfect, and of relishing their pure and spiritual enjoyments! nor are real christians by any means consulting either their duty or their interest, who live in the neglect of an ordinance which their Lord has instituted, and on which he has commanded them to attend in remembrance of him. The tears of grief and shame with which many have acknowledged and lamented the neglect on a sick bed, should stir up others to embrace the opportunities of christian communion while

they are continued; and, after their confinement, to return to the sanctuary with a sincere resolution of joining themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant; there to pay their vows unto him in the presence of all his people. God himself has in his holy word declared that man a fool, and he will most certainly find himself so at last, who having vowed a vow unto the Lord *deferreth* to pay; what then shall we say of them, or what must they think of themselves, who not only defer, but totally and forever neglect to fulfil their engagements. Few serious christians have passed through long and dangerous afflictions without entering into religious engagements, either in or after them, in case of recovery. Many of the servants of God have found it a very useful practice to draw up a written form of dedication, to sign and date it, and to read it over and renew it annually

all

all their lives, devoting the day,
with peculiar solemnity, to the ex-
ercises of Prayer and Thank-
giving.—

Having met with such a form in
a little Pamphlet entitled “Reco-
very from Sickness,” I shall tran-
scribe it for the Readers assistance
in this situation, referring it to
every one to make such alterations
and additions as may farther suit
the frame of his mind, and the
circumstances of his case.—

A SOLEMN ACT OF DEVOTION,

SELF-DEDICATION TO GOD.

“ EVERLASTING GOD;
“ the Fountain of Life; who fill-
“ est, supportest, and quickenest
“ all Things: I bow myself, as in
“ thy Presence, and unfeignedly
“ adore thee, as the *Former* of my
“ Body, as the *Father* of my Spi-
“ rit,

" sit, and as the constant Preserver
 " and Benefactor of both. I con-
 " fess myself to be under infinite
 " and every possible Obligation to
 " love, and to serve Thee, with
 " all the Powers of that excellent
 " Nature thou hast given me: but
 " in innumerable Instances I have
 " greatly abused, and thereby for-
 " feited my Life. FATHER, I have
 " sinned against Heaven, and before
 " thee; and am no more worthy to
 " live upon the Face of thy Earth,
 " or to taste the various Goodness
 " which is here provided for thy
 " Children. The noble Organs of
 " my Body, and Powers of my
 " Soul, I have too often yielded as
 " Instruments of Unrighteousness to
 " the Service of SIN; most justly
 " therefore might I now have been
 " languishing under Sicknes, rack'd
 " by tormenting Pains, or cut down
 " by the Hand of Death—But, a-
 " dored be thy Mercy, that thou
 " hast not rewarded me according to
 " my

"my Deserts. That thou still waitest"
"to be gracious; and hast lately in-"
"terposed by thy kind and almighty"
"Arm to remove my sore Disor-"
"ders, and to rescue me from the"
"Grave which was just swallowing"
"me up. I drew near to the"
"Shades of Death, and unless thy"
"Goodness had prevented me, my"
"Soul had now dwelt in Silence,"
"and gone down amongst the dead."
"For ever magnified be thy Grace,"
"which hath turned my Mourn-"
"ing into Joy; which said unto"
"me return; which permits me"
"yet to live, yea, to live surround-"
"ed with Blessings of such va-"
"rious kinds.

"What Thanks can I render to"
"thine INFINITE MAJESTY for"
"this unspeakable Favour! I"
"praise, I extol thee, with all my"
"Spirit and Strength. I adore"
"thee as my LIFE, and the Length"
"of my Days, the Guardian, Pre-"
"server, and Restorer of my Frame:"
"and

“ and here, as with a prostrate,
 “ and most truly grateful Soul, I
 “ consecrate and give MY SELF ab-
 “ solutely to THEE. I most so-
 “ lemnly avouch thee ALMIGHTY
 “ JEHOVAH, (as in thine infinite
 “ Goodness thou hast been pleased
 “ to permit me) for my *Father*,
 “ my *Portion*, my *King*, and my
 “ GOD. The *Life* which THOU
 “ gavest me, and hast thus graci-
 “ ously preserv’d, I most unfeign-
 “ edly devote to Thee: to be regu-
 “ lated by thy *Laws*; spent in thy
 “ *Service*; and conducted in thy
 “ *Fear*. I renounce every Thing
 “ as my *Happiness* in comparison of
 “ thy *Favour*: And to please and
 “ obey Thee, shall be the chief
 “ Ambition and Care, and the
 “ governing Principle of all my fu-
 “ ture Life.

“ All my Concerns, both of Body
 “ and Soul, I most gratefully re-
 “ sign into thy wise and good
 “ Hands: rejoicing that thou wilt
 “ conde-

“ condescend to manage and di-
“ rect them for me. I now pro-
“ mise, through thy Help, to be
“ *always contented*, yea, will en-
“ deavour to be *always thankful*,
“ however thou art pleased to deal
“ either with *me*, or with *mine*:
“ being assured, that THOU know-
“ est *what is good for me* infinitely
“ better than I can judge for my-
“ self. Behold O LORD I am
“ *thine! thine* by the most sacred
“ and inviolable Ties; *made* by
“ thy Power; *maintain'd* by thy
“ Bounty; *guarded* by thy Provi-
“ dence; *restored* by thy Favour
“ when going down into the Pit;
“ and by the Blood of thy *dear*
“ *Son redeemed* from the Power of
“ eternal Darkness and Death—
“ Deal therefore with *thy Servant*
“ as seemeth Good in thy sight.
“ Whatever *Substance, Knowledge,*
“ *Influence, Time,* or any other
“ Talent, I now do, or ever shall
“ possess, I most heartily devote
“ it

“ it to thine Honour and Service.
“ Thy Will shall be the Rule, and
“ thy Glory the End of all my fu-
“ ture Actions; and some part of
“ every Day shall be employed in
“ solemnly invoking and praising
“ thy GLORIOUS NAME. Chuse,
“ O LORD GOD most wise and
“ most merciful, my Portion and
“ my Lot for me: guide me by thy
“ Counsel through all the Mazes of
“ the present World, and at last
“ receive me to thy Kingdom and
“ Glory in the other.

“ To THEE, likewise, HOLY
“ JESUS, my most gracious Re-
“ deemer, the Son of GOD, and
“ Saviour of the World, I most
“ unfeignedly devote MY SELF, and
“ ALL that I have. Worthy is the
“ Lamb that was slain to receive
“ Blessing, and Honour, and Glory,
“ and Power, and Wisdom, and
“ Riches, and Strength. I was lost,
“ but Thou savedst me: a Prisoner
“ of Death, but Thou diedst, that I
“ might

might live. I am *thine*, for thou
hast loved me, and wash'd me from
my Sins, and redeem'd me by thy
Blood: I now therefore, from
my Soul, absolutely renounce
whatever is inconsistent with thy
Property and Claim in me: I sin-
cerely abjure *the World* and *the*
Flesh, as far as they in the least
oppose *the Authority* of CHRIST;
whom alone I now avouch as my
Proprietor and King. I here bow
myself before Thee, in token of
the deepest and sincerest Sub-
jection of my *Body*, *Soul*, and
Spirit to thy Government and
Care. I bind myself as by a
solemn Oath of Allegiance; swear-
ing to be *faithful* to my DIVINE
MASTER even unto Death: that
his Enemies, shall be my Ene-
mies; his Friends, mine; and
that my whole Life shall be con-
ducted according to the *Pattern*
and *Laws* of his Gospel.

S

“ I

"I BELIEVE in THEE, *Blessed*
"JESUS, as THE CHRIST of GOD;
"as the *only Saviour* of the World;
"as the *Light*, the *Resurrection*,
"and the *Life of Men*. I most
"humbly resign my Understand-
"ing, my Will, and every Pas-
"sion and Power of my Nature
"to be sanctified, controul'd, and
"directed by Thee.—Take a *dis-*
"tressed Soul into the Arms of thy
"Love, who flies to Thee alone for
"Salvation and Help: Write my
"Name in the Book of Life: Sup-
"port me under all the Troubles;
"strengthen me for all the Con-
"flicts; carry me safe through all
"the Difficulties and Dangers of
"my present State; and at last
"present me faultless before the
"Presence of GOD with exceeding
"Triumph and Joy.

"And forasmuch as by *my own*
"Strength I am utterly unable to
"keep the Covenant I have now
"made, and to perform what I
"have

" have *promised*, I here also most
" humbly dedicate myself to the
" HOLY and Ever-blessed SPIRIT;
" my Body I most thankfully de-
" vote to be *its Temple*; and every
" Power of my Soul I resign to *its*
" Influence: may it descend and
" ever dwell in me; and so entirely
" possess me, that every Appetite
" and Passion, every Thought and
" Imagination of my Heart may
" be made perfectly conformable
" to the *Image* and *Will* of GOD;
" and I may daily grow up into a
" Meetness for the Mansions of the
" Blessed above.

" And now blessed be GOD who
" has inclined my Heart to enter
" into this Covenant; and blessed
" be his Name, who, I trust, will
" enable me faithfully to keep it.
" In an humble Dependance upon
" the promis'd Aids of *his Spirit*,
" through CHRIST my all-power-
" ful and compassionate Redeemer,
" I will now subscribe my Name to

“ it, and call *Heaven* to witness to
 “ my Sincerity therein.”

“ Oh that the Covenant I now
 “ ratify on *Earth*, may be ratified
 “ in *Heaven*! Affix, blessed SA-
 “ VIOUR, who art the Mediator of
 “ the new Covenant, thy Signet
 “ thereto; and now seal by THY
 “ SPIRIT both my Body and Soul
 “ to that everlasting Redemption for
 “ which according to thy Promise
 “ we believingly wait. Amen and
 “ Amen.”

Done this Day of
 in the Year 17

PASSAGES of Scripture proper
 to be read on this Occasion are the
 xxiii. xxvii. xxx. xxxii. lxvi. ciii.
 and cxvi. *Psalms*. And the xxxviii
 of *Isaiah*.



C H A P. II.

Exhortations to Persons of different Dispositions and Characters after Afflictions.

1. *T*O the Ungodly, and the Sinner.
Pain and sickness overtake many such; and leave not a few as ignorant and as harden'd as they found them. They said in their hearts before "there is no GOD:" nor do they now like to retain GOD in their knowledge. His service was a weariness to them, and still their language is "who is the Lord that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" If they trembled a while under the rod, they have again cast off fear,

210. *Address to the Ungodly.*

and have returned with the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They manifest the same spirit of impiety and prophaneness, resume their former conversation, seek their old companions in iniquity, and pursue the same course. He that was false, unrighteous and unjust, is so still. He that was unholy, is unholy still. The proud retains his haughtiness, and the covetous worldling continues to mind earthly things. The despiser of the gospel, the hater of godliness and good men, the enemy of the cross of Christ persists in his contempt and opposition, the scorner in his scorning, and the obstinate unbeliever in his infidelity. Nay, of some recovered from afflictions, it is very apparent that they are two-fold more the children of hell than before.—Of such, said the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, “I have told you often, and now tell
“ you

"you weeping." And who that thinks seriously of their guilt and danger can forbear to shed a tear over them? Oh that such would think and weep for themselves! Your situation, Sirs, is truly deplorable and dreadfully alarming. God, by his rod, has been calling you to consider your ways, to humble yourselves under his mighty hand, and to turn unto the Lord: But you would not hear. And now, besides all the other instructions with which he has favoured you both in publick and private, you have to answer for this visitation; for all the awakening, and all the merciful circumstances with which it has been attended. And when God rises up how will you stand? When he judges, what will you, what can you answer? Think not to put the evil day far from you. He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

medy. But you do not resolve that you never will repent. No; you hope in some future period to have both leisure and a heart for it: And, after such an affliction, you think you may indulge for a while; nor are you apprehensive of danger, being now as strong as ever, and perhaps in better health than before.—The presumption reminds me of an anecdote I met with not long ago, of a person of rank in Ancient Lacedemonia: A messenger came to him, as he was spending an evening in the excesses of riot, with a letter from a friend, sent to forewarn him of a design to assassinate him. The messenger observing that he threw it carelessly aside without opening it, pressed him to examine the contents as of very serious consequence. “*Seria cras,*” said he (serious things t’morrow) nor would he be persuaded to pay the least attention either to the messenger
 or

of his message. And before the morrow, he was no more.—Knowest thou, my Reader, what shall be on the morrow? This night thy soul may be required of thee. But if spared to future years, thou hast little reason to expect that the longer thou continuest in sin thou wilt be better able, or better disposed, to forsake it. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the Leopard his spots? then may they that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well.* Or, should pain and danger in a dying hour awaken and alarm you, after persisting obstinately, spite of every admonition from the word and the rod of God, in a course of disobedience, can you hope that he will hear the cries of your distress in your last moments? He has himself declared that he will not; † “Because I have called

* Jer. xlii. 23. † Prov. i. 25—31.

“and ye refused, I have stretched
“out my hand, and no man re-
“garded; but ye have set at
“nought all my counsel, and
“would none of my reproof: I
“will also laugh at your calamity,
“I will mock when your fear
“cometh, when your fear cometh
“as desolation, and your destruc-
“tion as a whirlwind; when dis-
“tress and anguish cometh upon
“you: Then shall they call upon
“me, but I will not answer, they
“shall seek me early, but they
“shall not find me; for that they
“hated knowledge, and did not
“chuse the fear of the Lord;
“they would none of my coun-
“sel, they despised all my re-
“proof, therefore shall they eat
“of the fruit of their own way,
“and be filled with their own
“devices.” What then concerns
you? Now if you will hear his
voice, as uttered in your affliction
and recovery, and in both inforcing
the

the instructions of his holy word, harden not your heart, lest you provoke a righteous God to give you up as incorrigible; and to say concerning you as of Ephraim, "He is joined to idols let him alone," My word, my servants, my spirit let him alone. Israel were in a sad state indeed when God spake of withholding the salutary chastisements of his rod as what would aggravate their guilt, and harden them in impenitence rather than humble and reclaim them. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.† But I proceed to offer some hints

§. 2. *To Persons upheld in, and after afflictions by a false hope; more particularly, formal Professors, and the Self-righteous.*

1. *Formal Professors.* Or, those described in the word of God as

† Isaiah i. 5.

dead

dead while they have a name that they live; and maintaining the form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof. They have gone so long and so often to church, they have very regularly and decently said their prayers; they have taken the Sacrament, both in publick with others, and privately on their sick bed. And they have since been to publick worship, again to return thanks to Almighty God for his goodness to them. "Hence, say they, what have we to fear? surely we stand as good a chance for heaven as many of our neighbours." And so you may, and yet never get there at last. You have gone through the round of external acts of devotion; but did you consider in and after them, either to what end, or with what temper of mind you engaged in them? Ignorance and inattention in these important points would render the whole

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whole not only unacceptable, and unprofitable, but a solemn mockery, and, as such, to God an abomination. The ordinances of divine worship are means which he has graciously appointed to enlighten the understanding; inform and convince the judgment; excite, guide and regulate the affections and passions; correct and refine the spiritual taste; and, in a word, to restore and improve the image of God in the soul of man, and form it to a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. But have these ends been answered by them upon your soul? you have not, perhaps, so much as desired that they might, nay you have not even thought of them; you have not known that any such designs were to be answered by these institutions. All you ever attended to was to go decently through the external service, without ever pouring out your soul devoutly

T before

218 *Address to formal Professors.*

before God in the petitions and thanksgivings presented to him, humbling yourself at his footstool, hearkening to his holy word, or so much as realizing the glorious Majesty of the God into whose presence you came, or the sacred and solemn nature and end of the services in which you engaged before him. And yet you rest, perfectly satisfied in the part you have taken and the place you have filled in the house of God. But have you never read, or have you entirely forgotten the awakening declaration of Jesus in his discourse with the woman of Samaria.* “ The hour cometh and now
“ is, when the true worshippers
“ shall worship the Father in spirit
“ and in truth, for the Father
“ seeketh such to worship him:
“ God is a spirit, and they that
“ worship him must worship him

* John iv. 23, 24.

“ in

“in spirit and in truth,” Have you not been told that he cannot be deceived, and that he will not be mocked? nay permit me to appeal to the conviction of your judgment and conscience, and to ask you as in the presence of a heart-searching God, do you not firmly believe that even the most solemn looks and forms, the loudest expressions and lowliest postures of devotion are vile hypocrisy without the heart? Nor are you to satisfy yourself by any means with a consciousness of sincerity in some of these publick exercises of religion, without attending to their influence and effects.—If they have answered their end; if they have done you the good they are intended to do, the serious impressions made by them will be deep and abiding; you will live the prayers and vows you have offered unto God, and the instructions which his word has imparted to

220 *Address to formal Professors.*
you. This is indeed the best evidence of your having been sincere in them. And is this wanting? Be not deceived. Hear a faithful monitor expressing his concern for you, left when weighed in the balances you should be found wanting. When on a sick bed, and in solemn expectation of the tribunal of Christ, was you never fearful for yourself? What is the hope of the hypocrite when God taketh away his soul? Aye what indeed! Is it not justly represented in the same book, as a spider's web? * Can you think it so and yet make it your confidence? It ought rather to be your humiliation. Never did Jesus speak in stronger and more alarming terms of the guilt and danger of any character than that of the hypocrite. See his discourse to such in the 23d Chapter of Matthew's Gos-

* Job xxvii. 80. viii. 14.

Address to the Self-Righteous. 221

pel. Meditate seriously on his admonitions and warnings, and adopt the prayer of David (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.) "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

And as you desire to find it and be kept in it, permit me to caution you against the temper and language of

2. *The Self-Righteous.* It is said of the celebrated parable of the Publican and Pharisee, that "Jesus spake it to certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others;"* imagining, not only that they excelled their neighbours, but that their virtues were so many and so great, as to entitle them to the favour of God and the happiness

* Matt. xviii. 9.

222 *Address to the Self-Righteous.*

of heaven. The vanity and danger of this confidence is faithfully exposed in the parable; nevertheless the same spirit still appears, and that in not a few who call themselves his disciples. Some have carried it with them even to the borders of the grave. I wish the light and trifling behaviour of many around them, and especially the undistinguishing terms in which their spiritual Teachers themselves often talk to the sick and pray with them, may not have contributed in many instances to the dangerous delusion. Such treatment must certainly tend to encourage it where there was any disposition towards it before. But it concerns every one to watch and pray at all times, and especially in the near views of another world, against this temptation. To take heed lest the pride of his heart deceive him, and he be found seeking shelter in a refuge of

of lies which he is told shall be swept away in the day of the Lord's anger. Permit me to remind thee, my fellow-sinner, that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall or can ever be justified. Thou hast broken that law times and ways without number: nor is it in thy power to make atonement for thy transgressions. The tears of penitence become thee; but imagine not that they, or that thy best obedience for the future, will entitle thee to remission and salvation. That obedience at best will ever be imperfect: And thou art indebted to God both for power and a disposition to perform all thou doest. After having received wilt thou then boast as if thou hadst not received? By no means. For know that when thou hast done all, thou wilt have reason to acknowledge thyself an unprofitable servant, and that hast done but that which was thy

224 *Address to the Self-Righteous.*

thy duty to do.—Thou hast not therefore thyself any thing wherein to glory or trust before God. And it would be equally vain to rely on thy godly parentage or religious privileges; the knowledge thou hast acquired of the gospel of Christ, or the long profession thou hast made of thy faith in it and zeal for it. Though baptized in his name, a constant worshipper in his courts, and even a guest at his table; he will say to thee, another day, depart from me, I never knew thee, if a stranger to that faith which, while it purifies the heart, humbles it in the sight of a holy and righteous God; receives Jesus Christ relying upon him alone for salvation; and dictates the language of the Apostle Paul,* “I
“ count all things but loss for the
“ excellency of the knowledge of
“ Christ Jesus my Lord; if so be

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

“ I

"I may be found in him, not
 "having mine own righteousness,
 "which is of the law, but that
 "which is through the faith of
 "Christ, the righteousness which
 "is of God by faith."—I shall
 conclude with

3. *Some short hints to such as have
 been depressed and discouraged in and
 by their afflictions:* whose spirits as
 well as strength have been weak-
 ened by the way; and that, not
 merely to such a degree and in
 such a manner as their disorder
 would naturally and necessarily
 occasion, but from the most alarm-
 ing views, both of their sufferings
 and of themselves; as if the Al-
 mighty had been manifesting there-
 in his indignation against them as
 the chief of sinners, and marking
 them out before-hand as vessels of
 wrath fitted for destruction. These
 are certainly, very hasty and
 ground-

groundless conclusions in many; and very frequently in those who are most inclined to adopt them. Though, as has been before observed, some sufferers may read their sin in their punishment; nevertheless sickness and pain are so far common to men that it would be highly unreasonable in all that endure tribulation to think hardly either of their character or state merely from what they suffer in the body. I will suppose that your trials have been long and heavy, that you have suffered often, and in a variety of ways: But can you imagine your sorrows have been such as none of the people of God have ever endured? Or that they were of a nature, and in a degree inconsistent with his love and mercy towards you? Look into the records of his servants as preserved in the sacred scriptures and elsewhere: and examine what his
word

discouraged in and by Afflictions. 227

word says of the conduct of his providence towards them. That not only tells you that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but that whom the Lord loveth he rebuketh and chastneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; so that when he chastizes he deals with you as he is used to do with his children; and he does it, not for his pleasure, but for your profit, that you may be a partaker of his holiness.—See Hebrews, chap. xii. v. 1—12.—Instead therefore of being discouraged by your sufferings, you ought rather to be thankful for them. Let your only anxiety be to have clear evidences of your regeneration and adoption, and to learn the several useful lessons your afflictions were intended to teach; and, far from being distressed in the review of what you have suffered, your sicknesses and pains will furnish you abundant matter
of

of thanksgiving and praises, as the
gracious means appointed and
over-ruled by your heavenly Fa-
ther, to make you meet for the in-
heritance of the Saints in light.—



On visiting the SICK.

IT is a wise and good maxim, though in an Apocryphal Writer,* “Be not slow to visit the sick, for that shall make thee to “be beloved.” An inspired Apostle† has carried the sentiment still farther, and urges a more weighty consideration to inforce the practice; representing it as an act of “pure religion, and undefiled before God, even the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” It is therefore, as such, recommended to all in every situation who regard the favour either of God or

* Ecclesiasticus vii. 35.

† James i. 2.

man. There is indeed a forwardness to intrude into a sick chamber, that often proves troublesome both to the afflicted themselves, and those who are most tenderly interested in them. * More especially when it appears to proceed merely from an impertinent curiosity, or a disposition to intermeddle in other mens matters, without either any real inclination or capacity to serve them. Yet to the afflicted pity should be shewn: And it is undoubtedly the generous ardor of sympathetic friendship that hastens many to their bed-sides; while the Professions of some, and the Connections of others, make it more immediately their duty to be often there. May the sick chamber prove truly instructive to all who are called into it! And it is equally the wish of humanity and friendship, that such may ever render themselves acceptable and useful in that situation. They must know that the

On visiting the Sick

the afflicted, in many cases, require all the caution and care of which they are capable. That they need to be attended with a wakeful eye, a quick ear, a soft voice, a light foot, a gentle hand and a tender heart. Or, in other words, that it becomes those about them to exercise prudence and skill, in the whole of their deportment, as well as to treat them with all possible delicacy and tenderness: not only to avoid every word, and even every look that would either increase their complaints, or render them less fit to bear them; but to behave ever towards them in such a manner as to lighten their burden, or soothe and cheer their spirits under it: preserving, uniformly and conscientiously in all that they say and do an invariable regard to the dictates of true wisdom, sound knowledge, and the strictest fidelity. For, in no case whatever, can any who attend

the sick be justified in attempting to deceive them, especially where their most important, their immortal interest is depending. And as life is peculiarly uncertain in the circumstances to which we refer, such conduct then would be inexcusable in a Physician, but still more so in a Divine, to whom that great charge is more immediately committed. It is, to souls in such a situation, a false delicacy; a mistaken, a cruel tenderness.

Having mentioned the Physician, I will beg leave to submit to the Gentlemen of the Faculty, (including all who attend the sick, whether Physicians or Apothecaries) the few following extracts from a Letter to a Young Gentleman on his leaving College, *Medicinæ Doctor* with honourable Testimonials, and entering on the Practice of Physick.

“ DEAR

Letter to a young Physician. 233

DEAR SIR,

I congratulate you on the credit and success with which you have gone through your course of studies preparatory to the Profession upon which you are entering, and the flattering prospect which that affords you of appearing in it with reputation and advantage. The Character of a good Physician is a truly respectable one; and He that supports it deserves well of all men. The pains he has taken to fit him for it, and the application he must submit to, both at home and abroad, in order to be useful in it, intitle him to universal affection and esteem; if, with the character of the judicious and faithful Physician, he maintain that of the friend of mankind, the Gentleman, and the Christian. To support

234 *Letter to a young Physician*

"teach the great lessons which you will learn in such
 "But will you permit me, before I
 "finish my Letter, to suggest some
 "hints on the conduct of Gen-
 "tlemen of your Profession in a
 "sick Chamber. In that line of
 "life in which you are to appear,
 "you will often have to do with
 "your fellow-creatures in their
 "more serious moments; and such
 "scenes will probably present
 "themselves, as, to a young Gen-
 "tleman of your refined taste,
 "may be not only painful but
 "disgusting. Your good sense,
 "however, will teach you to
 "make such candid allowances
 "for the different tempers, educa-
 "tions and circumstances of those
 "for whom you are concerned,
 "as will enable you ever to act
 "in Character both towards your
 "Patients themselves and all a-
 "round them: especially confi-
 "dering

dering the great disadvantage at which you see them, in such seasons. It will be your wisdom to bear with their weaknesses; those, at least into which they are betrayed by their distresses, and a painful anxiety for their speedy recovery. Suffer, My dear Sir, nay, encourage, those enquiries which their sorrows naturally dictate. They may seem to you impertinent; but, if not apparently offered with a disposition to offend, you will not be offended by them. If prudence oblige you in some instances to wave a direct answer, by the tender and respectful manner in which you decline it, you may even oblige and please, rather than wound, the enquirer. I need scarce mention the impropriety of being tedious in your visits, or intemperate or delicate in your eating and drinking; or caution

“ you

236 *Letter to a young Physician.*

"you against entering into sub-
 "jects of conversation that, in an
 "afflicted family, would appear
 "unseasonable and irksome. On
 "the other hand, do not seem too
 "hasty or, too important to hear
 "all your patient has to say. Dr.
 "rect and gratify him in his infor-
 "mation by your enquiries, rather
 "than seem inattentive to it. I
 "must say, the confidence which a
 "Patient reposes in his Physician,
 "in putting his life, under God,
 "into his hand, intitles him to a
 "respectful audience. My young
 "Friend will pardon the freedom
 "with which I write, as he knows
 "the principle that dictates it.—
 "In that confidence I will beg
 "leave to say a word or two on
 "the subject of Fees. As a Gen-
 "tleman by Education and Pro-
 "fession, you will deserve that en-
 "couragement which may enable
 "you to appear so, while you con-
 "tinue to act in character. And
 "real

Letter to a young Physician. 237

“real merit will necessarily intro-
“duce you into families of rank
“and circumstances, and secure
“your growing reputation and
“success in them. But by no
“means overlook even the lower
“classes of mankind. I could
“wish you neither to despise, nor
“utterly neglect even those that
“you know are unable to reward
“you. You will not lose your
“reward either hereafter, or even
“here, for services benevolently
“undertaken, though you may
“not receive it either in the way
“or degree, or at the time you
“expected. Mankind are dis-
“posed to remark, love and en-
“courage the humane, conde-
“scending and beneficent. It is
“true you are to live by your
“Profession, and, as I said above,
“you are intitled to a genteel
“sustenance. But do not seek it
“by making a mere mercenary
“trade of your profession: by
“extort-

"extorting such fees from your
 "Patients in a fit of sickness, as
 "would distress them and their
 "families, for months and years
 "to come. This would be oblig-
 "ing them to pay dear indeed for
 "your services even in case of suc-
 "cess; and add greatly to a family's
 "loss, if, after such heavy expences,
 "they are deprived of the head of
 "it; as well as make them, and all
 "about them, ever afraid for the
 "future to solicit your assistance.
 "— Permit me only to add, that
 "as, from your knowledge of the
 "human frame, the diseases to
 "which it is incident, and the
 "various provision made both for
 "its support and relief, as well as
 "from the testimony of the Holy
 "Scripture, you cannot but be
 "convinced of the Being, Perfec-
 "tions and Providence of God, it
 "will be far from a reflection on
 "your good sense, or professional
 "skill and abilities to acknow-
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Letter to a young Physician. 288

ledge him in all your ways. It has been remarked of some Gentlemen of your Profession, that they have done more hurt in the moral world, by their vain and sceptical conversation, than good in the natural by all their prescriptions. I am persuaded, my dear Sir, though you should be successful in the latter to many thousands, it would pain you to think of any one to whose mind you had conveyed an infection which he will carry with him into another world, and which must prove to him there, like the worm that never dies, for ever incurable, though inexpressibly agonizing. You know from whom I have borrowed the allusion, and I hope you revere the authority. I have had the honour of knowing Physicians in high esteem, and extensive Practise, who both by their conversation and their prayers,

240 *Letter to a young Physician.*

“ prayers in their professional visits,
“ have made the most agreeable
“ and useful impressions of religion
“ on the minds of their Patients;
“ and of whom they have thought
“ and spoke often afterward, with
“ peculiar pleasure and respect as
“ imparting salutary instruction to
“ the soul, while restoring health to
“ the body. The truly christian
“ Divine, far from being offend-
“ ed with such an one as inter-
“ fering in his province, will love
“ and thank him for his assistance
“ in the offices of real benevolence
“ to a fellow-creature, in circum-
“ stances in which such services
“ are ever needed, and in which,
“ with a divine blessing, they may
“ prove of the most solid and last-
“ ing advantage. Mentioning a
“ divine blessing, puts me in mind
“ of an anecdote I have heard of
“ the celebrated Boerhaave: who
“ was used, I am told, to write
“ D. O. M. F. at the bottom of his
“ pre-

Ministers visiting the Sick. 241

“criptions (Deus Optimus Maximus Faveat) to express an acknowledgment of his dependence on the blessing of the Most High God for the success of every application. — Sincerely wishing that blessing may ever attend you.

“ I am,

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your's, &c.”



Ministers visiting the S I C K.

Visiting the sick is a serious, important, and very difficult part of a Christian Minister's duty: And a duty that, if his congregation is numerous, will require much time and thought, and no small degree of pious zeal to discharge

X

chargewith fidelity and usefulness. He is to attend all his People in all their afflictions. The poor as well as the rich; the ignorant and unlearned as well as persons of better talents and a more liberal education; not overlooking children, or even the meanest servants; and that, if there be any probability of doing good, without formal invitations from them. And to visit them, not only (in the modern phrase) to pay his compliments to them, or to shew his respect to them and their friends by enquiring after their health, and expressing his good wishes for their recovery; but as part of the flock of which he is appointed and has engaged to take the oversight at all times, and in all circumstances; and to which he is, by virtue of his Office as their Pastor and Shepherd, to pay peculiar attention in times of distress and danger. In his visits at those seasons he is called

ed to impart spiritual instructions to them and others around them, and to pray with them and for them. In order to perform these duties of his office with propriety and advantage (even supposing him to have acquired a good stock of religious knowledge and experience himself) he will find it necessary to know the true characters of those with and for whom he is concerned in such circumstances. As he desires this, it is of the utmost importance that he cultivate a constant and intimate acquaintance with his People in health. Every minister may not have it in his power to do this to the degree he could wish; the great distance at which some live from him, and the multiplicity of business in which others of them are engaged; his ill health, or various and important avocations may render it exceeding difficult and utterly impracticable to secure frequent interviews

with many of them, at least for such purposes as these. But every minister that desires to approve his fidelity to the souls committed to his care will gladly embrace every opportunity, and endeavour to improve it in the best manner he is able. And that not only in order to direct him in his publick prayers with and for them in the house of God, and his discourses to them there, but likewise to enable him to know how to address them, and to apply to the Almighty on their behalf in affliction. I will suppose a Minister has not been inattentive to this part of his duty: and yet perhaps, when he comes to the bed-side of a sick and dying friend he may know little of his real character, and nothing of the then frame of his mind. Will he, can he be unconcerned about it? Or in what way is he to have desirable satisfaction? It must be either from the afflicted himself, or those who
have

have been intimately acquainted with him. After all he does or can hear of him from the mouths of others, he will wish to hear somewhat from his own. His duty and his desire is to speak a word in season to him, and to offer petitions suited to his temper and state. But how can he? They are unknown to him. He may, on conversing with him, betray an ignorance and hardness of heart that would shew him to be in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity: or he may discover that ingenuous contrition, and deep humility, that believing dependance on the Saviour, and that affectionate love to him, that filial fear of God, and that lowly subjection of soul to him as his heavenly Father, that would give his minister reason to look upon him as an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ: Or, after all he can hear of him or from him, his character may appear exceedingly

246 *Ministers visiting the Sick.*

ceedingly doubtful, and he may be utterly at a loss to judge whether he has, or has not, yet passed from death unto life.—And must not every discerning mind, that thinks with any degree of attention and seriousness, see the gross impropriety, nay the sin and danger of a minister's praying and conversing in the same strain with persons on a sick bed in such very different conditions? Would he not be inexcusably betraying the trust reposed in him, and leading souls blindfold to the borders of eternity, in hurrying over the same forms with them all, and encouraging the same hopes in them all, without so much as knowing any thing of their spiritual state, or religious characters? And he is still more criminal, if, knowing them, he pays no proper regard to them, either in his addresses to them, or in those which he presents to God for them in their last moments.

Would

Would not a Physician be justly despised, who should sit down to prescribe for his patient, as soon as he enters his chamber, without examining his case? Would not an Apothecary be ashamed to carry the same medicine with him in his pocket where ever he goes, and administer it indiscriminately to all his Patients, as a *Panacea*, a cure for every disorder? And shall one that appears in a far more important character, a Physician of souls, act a part more injudicious, undistinguishing and destructive? God forbid! But I will suppose I know somewhat, and that greatly to the disadvantage of the afflicted. I have heard, for instance, that he has been a prophane swearer; a drunkard, unjust, or unclean; an enemy of the cross and of the gospel of Christ; that he has cast off all appearance and profession of religious fear, and that he restrains prayer, both in private and in public,

248 *Ministers visiting the Sick.*

lick, before GOD; or that while preserving the form of godliness, he most evidently denies the power thereof; shall I dare to encourage his hope? or to administer to him the consolations of the gospel without knowing, or having any good reason to believe, that he has been convinced of the iniquity of his sins, and the danger of his state? Ought I not rather, when I see a soul on the brink of eternity, sleeping the sleep of death, endeavour to rouse him to sensibility, and a becoming and necessary concern for his safety? should I not in faithfulness labour to excite his apprehensions, tears and prayers "what
" meanest thou O sleeper! arise
" call upon GOD, if so be that
" GOD will think upon thee that
" thou perish not;" rather than soothe and flatter him, and administer opiates to the lethargic. Such, (I cannot forbear saying again here) so injudicious and destructive is the

the conduct of those who speak peace to such in death, by speaking to them and praying for them as beloved brethren in Christ; and above all by administering the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to them as such: especially considering the natural vanity of the human heart, and the disposition many discover to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. I have now before me a very solemn and alarming message sent from God by his servant Ezekiel to ministers, who thus healed the hurt of his people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace; and I pray God it may never be forgotten by me or any of my Brethren. I mean that in Ezekiel, Ch. xiii. 10—16. “Be-
“ cause, even because they have
“ seduced my people, saying,
“ Peace, and there was no peace;
“ and one built up a wall, and lo
“ others daubed it with untem-
“ pered

pered mortar, &c. Therefore
 thus saith the Lord, I will break
 down the wall and it shall fall,
 and it shall be consumed in the
 midst thereof, and ye shall know
 that I am the Lord: thus will I
 accomplish my wrath upon the
 wall, and upon them that have
 daubed it with untempered mor-
 tar, to wit, the Prophets of Is-
 rael which see visions of peace
 for her, and there is no peace
 saith the Lord God." He hath
 indeed said that again and again of
 persons of that character: Isaiah
 xlviii. 22. & lvii. 21. "There is no
 peace to the wicked." Though
 an alarm be painful, if necessary,
 let us not weakly, and equally at
 our own peril and that of those
 with whom we have to do, let us
 not dare to withhold it; as such a
 neglect, as well as the flattery a-
 bove-mentioned, is threatened re-
 peatedly by the Almighty himself
 with very dreadful consequences,
 Ezekiel

Ezekiel iii. 18. & xxxiii. 6. "When
" I say unto the wicked thou shalt
" surely die, and thou givest him
" not warning, the same wicked
" man shall die in his iniquity;
" but his blood will I require at
" thine hand."

And as to afflicted Christians themselves, even they may need and require very different treatment. Different Christians have made different improvements in the divine life; nor have they all walked before God with equal degrees of steadiness, comfort, and usefulness. Some have entertained clear and just views of the christian covenant, and have lived habitually and long under their animating influence; others seem to know comparatively little of the blessings engaged for in it; to whom they are promised, in what way they are to be obtained, or of the Mediator himself through whom they are imparted. Some have
joy

252 *Ministers visiting the Sick.*

joy and peace in believing, are strong in faith giving glory to God, knowing that if their earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Others walk in darkness and see no light; and have, through fear of death, been all their lives time subject to bondage. In a word, the frames, dispositions and attainments of mens minds seem as various as the constitutions and disorders of their bodies: And the former may require as different advices from their Ministers, as the latter from their Physicians. It would lead me far beyond my present design, nor should I think of attempting, to dictate to my Brethren, what they should say to the sick in the several cases that occur, or in what words they should pray for them. All I wish is, to impress on their hearts and my own, a serious and abiding conviction of the propriety

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252 *Ministers visiting the Sick.*

priety and necessity of visiting them with a conscientious regard to their spiritual welfare; and of attempting it in such ways, and by such means as appear, under a divine blessing, most likely to promote it. Administering instruction, caution, admonition, or consolation as the different characters and conditions of the afflicted may require. That thus, in our private visits, as well as in our publick preaching, after the example of the Apostles * we may be “ warn-
“ ing every man, and teaching
“ every man in all wisdom, that
“ we may present every man per-
“ fect in Christ Jesus. Amen!”

* Col. i. 28.

F I N I S.

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